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STAR WARS - EPISODE I:
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REVEALED
HALF-LIFE:
BLUE SHIFT &
CIVILIZATION III

READER
AWARDS
2001

You've voted, we've counted
Check the results inside

FIRST REVIEW

TRIBES 2

The future of team warfare

EDGE OF CHAOS:
INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

Space combat has never looked so good

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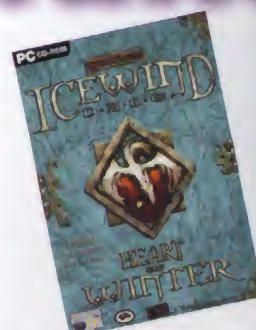


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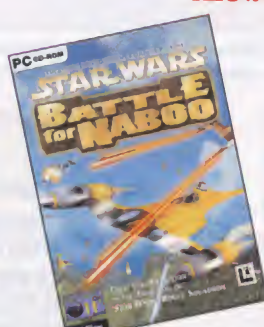
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**WIN THE
TOP 10
PC GAMES**
SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS
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50 **EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE** Westwood invented the RTS with *Dune 2*, now it's ready to take the world of spice into 3D. Has it still got what it takes to be a world-beater? Check out what we thought in our exclusive review of one of the biggest games of the year.

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ON THE CDS



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EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

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E-RACER
STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

PLUS
BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM
SUMMONER
HOSTILE WATERS
STAR WARS — EPISODE 1: THE BATTLE FOR NABOO
OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS
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END ZONE

Just when you thought the mag had ended... blimey, a whole lot more!

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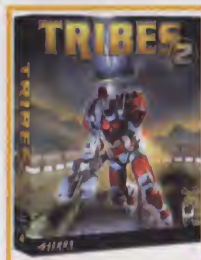
We all have an opinion on games, but who's right and who's wrong? James Lyon tells it how it is.

WIN!

THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (103), PC ZONE, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Thursday May 31 2001. The winner of our April (issue 101) cover compo was David Smith of Hereford, who wins something from the *ZONE* prize cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser.



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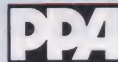
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THIS LIFE



As I was walking home from Brixton Tube station last night being accosted by a drunk in search of nicotine, I was hit by the following, rather obvious, thought. Life is fun because it's unpredictable. On my way home from work today I might be propositioned by a lovely lady who finds me unbelievably irresistible (highly unlikely). Then again, I might get squashed by a bus or sliced into little pieces by the Tube that was supposed to take me away from the people and back to Sky Sports One (more likely). The fact that you don't know what's going to happen, the fact that you're not woken every morning by a voice that says, "no one likes you, no one fancies you, so why bother..." makes you want to carry on playing.

It's the same with games. It's always been the case that every great game is unpredictable. If you go and watch football, you don't know whether you're going to watch a sterile 0-0 draw, a 4-3 thriller, a female streaker, or an idiot with an overblown sense of his own ego jumping over the advertising hoardings and kicking a supporter. Or even chess – although when I play the events are sadly extremely linear and short-lived.

Historically, PC games have been entirely predictable, but a massive shot in the arm has just come in the form a little-known Tamagotchi simulator called *Black & White*. I know because I've spent the last month furiously stroking and slapping my monkey, in a desperate bid to get it to behave. The size, depth and freeform nature of the game means you can do, pretty much, what you want, when you want (as long as you're willing to put up with the

“Historically, PC games have been entirely predictable, but a massive shot in the arm has just come in the form of *Black & White*”

consequences), and this for me signifies the next evolution in computer gaming history.

And there's better to come. Check out our preview of *Anarchy Online* on p90, and tell me that doesn't get your juices flowing. This is a game that's effectively a huge film waiting to be written, with a cast of you and thousands of others across the world. Unlike early online RPGs, AO has a storyline, there is a beginning and an end and there will be winners and losers, which sounds more interesting than bedding down on a riverbank and selling small earthenware pots to passing goblins. There are lots of games like AO slated for release over the next few years, but *Black & White* has proved that open-ended gameplay can work as a single-player entity. People are bound to try and copy it, but it seems to me that unimaginative developers are going to find it almost impossible to emulate something that's different every time you play it, which means creativity will shine.

But the games industry isn't going to change overnight. Linear games are still going to be made, and if they're constructed well they're still going to be fun, but they're a dying breed and rightly so. In a linear environment the only way you can improve things is to add a few baubles. Proper narrative comes from depth, and an environment where progression isn't reliant on moving forward, but from using your head and hoping and praying that you've made one of the correct choices. Now is it me, or is that lovely lady in *Black & White* heading my way?

Dave Woods
Editor



2 Tear up your ballot papers.

TOP STORY



Civilization. Defined as the ability to build blooming great concrete structures on top of all that greenery nonsense.

LET THE EMPIRE BUILDING BEGIN, IT'S CIVILIZATION III

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Firaxis
PUBLISHER Infogrames
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Early 2002
WEBSITE www.firaxis.com

IN SUMMARY

A turn-based strategy game with very small horizons — your job is simply to re-invent the history of mankind from pre-Biblical times right through to the space age. Conquest, exploration, development, diplomacy... You name it, *Civilization III* will ask you to tackle it.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Number three in a series that ranks as one of the greatest ever made, by one of the most prolific and highly respected developers in the industry? And you still want to know what the big deal is. OK, how about that it's turn-based, and it's still going to be brilliant.

We prepare to get civilised... yeah, as if

★ **ACTING UP** Elvis Bacon



It's prettier, it's slicker... but it's undeniably *Civ*.



New worker units will free up settlers from city development.



The blueprints for England's new international football stadium.



If you build it, they will come. Unfortunately.



Ghengis tries to go one better than the Poles by attacking a fleet on horseback.



What price for Sophie's neck if this old battle-axe was still on the throne?

You have to feel sorry for Sid Meier. Despite being immensely well-hung in the personal wealth department, globally feted by game players and designers, and the proud owner of a staggering collection of jumpers, he and his team have an unenviable task ahead of them.

Just how do you improve on perfection? Leaving aside the many other well-known projects to which Sid has contributed, the first two games of the *Civilization* series have garnered more 'Best Game Ever' awards than just about any other title.

When he created the original in 1990 it defined a new genre of empire-building games and set the standard in turn-based strategy for years to come. *Civ II* added a bit of polish and sophistication, and the detour into space (*Alpha Centauri*) did much the same only with murkier backgrounds.

The problem then becomes where to take the third instalment? We all know

they can't just tear up the rulebook and come up with something completely fresh and inspirational. In effect it has to be *Civ II*-and-a-bit or there will be a minor riot in the gaming world.

Civ III is pencilled in for release early next year, and although the team is veering towards an 'it'll be done when it's done' stand-off, they already have a fully playable prototype. On a technical level, it boasts an all-new graphics engine, replete with contoured maps

“There is a thorough overhaul of the pathing and AI, and a more streamlined, two-tier interface to accommodate the needs of veterans and novices”

(yes, elevations and terrain features affect strategies and combat) and fully animated units. There is also a thorough overhaul of the pathing and AI, and a more streamlined, two-tier interface to accommodate the needs of veterans and novices.

In gameplay terms, Firaxis is concentrating most notably on

diplomacy and combat. You'll be able to trade resources, agreements, technologies, units, maps and cities in any combination. This mix-and-match approach applies as much to new diplomatic agreements as it does to trade. For example, you might bargain for peace, with a mutual protection pact, a right of passage agreement and a trade embargo against the French.

An important distinction, however, is that newcomers won't have to deal

deserves. Along with any number of minor additions, the combat rules covering zones of control are being extensively reworked, so anachronistic units are no longer likely to be able to hold key positions against all logical dictates. Similarly, the effectiveness and involvement of ranged weapons such as artillery are being increased to reflect a more realistic military perspective – including 'softening' a target's defenses before a major assault.


Perhaps more interestingly (and with a definite nod to *Age Of Kings*), nations will be able to produce leaders from the past, each capable of changing the course of history either in their own lifetimes or through the efforts of future generations they influence.

There's no doubt *Civilization III*, with its expanded scope and endless tweaks will sell well and play even better. Whether it'll be capable of surprising us is less certain. But maybe, just maybe, Firaxis will manage to make the multiplayer aspect as compulsive as the single-player game. **EW**

with these added diplomatic complexities – the whole 'bargaining table' approach is tucked away for advanced users who don't scare easily.

Although it was never intended that way, with people being what they are, military aggression has become a key feature of the *Civ* experience. And so in *Civ III* it's finally getting the revamp it

TOP STORY



As well as the new chapter, *Blue Shift* also comes with improved models and weapons.

NO IT'S NOT THE SEQUEL...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Gearbox

PUBLISHER Vivendi

RELEASE DATE May

WEBSITE www.sierrastudios.com/games/hl-blueshift/

IN SUMMARY

You've played as Gordon Freeman, you've sampled life as a soldier, you're bored of waiting for the sequel and you want more *Half-Life*. This is a brand new episode and you play Barney the good-natured security guard: shoot things, rescue scientists and operate heavy machinery, that's your brief.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

Oh come, come. It's *Half-Life*, it's official and it's the only new content you're going to get this summer. It's also being developed by Gearbox who did a fairly decent job on *Opposing Force*, so you know it's not going to be a pile of cack.

HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT

But it is another official add-on for the best PC gamer ever, ever, ever...

★ WEARING A DIFFERENT HAT Dave Woods



The new autumn collection as modeled by Barney.



And welcome to the BBC World Service.



Oh no! Not you lot again...

Run! Run, I say! Run like the wind... Gordon Freeman's botched the job again.

Classic *Half-Life* action. It's enough to make grown men weep.

Less shooting, loads more puzzles. Is that a good thing?

Is *Half-Life* the best PC game ever? Three years on and the debate is still raging, mainly because there hasn't been a better or more innovative shooter released since, and also in part because of superb mods such as *Counter-Strike* ensuring that the *Half-Life* engine hasn't been consigned to a forgotten corner of your hard drive.

There's been a lot of talk about the official sequel recently, helped in part by a delayed announcement that has since been delayed again – sadly, it's now looking like it won't even be announced at next month's E3, which leaves addicts in the lurch somewhat. Or does it?

When the Dreamcast version of *Half-Life* was announced we were pretty pissed off to hear about an exclusive episode, *Blue Shift*, that was only going to be made available to the console kids. The cheek. Fittingly, it looks like we're going to get the last laugh. The game still hasn't been

released on the doomed hardware and *Blue Shift* has now been announced on the PC. Ya-boo, sucks to you.

Blue Shift is being developed by Gearbox Software (of *Opposing Force* fame) and completes the trilogy of the Black Mesa compound. In the original you played Gordon Freeman, hapless scientist and lone action-hero; in *Opposing Force* you saw life through the eyes of one of the soldiers; in *Blue Shift* you take control of Barney, the

always been that your primary goal is to rescue scientists and civilians, and, in a feature that's bound to interest our own Steve Hill, operate heavy machinery. Puzzles play a major part in the game, and from the

“In *Blue Shift* you take control of Barney, the security guard you encountered as Gordon Freeman in the original”

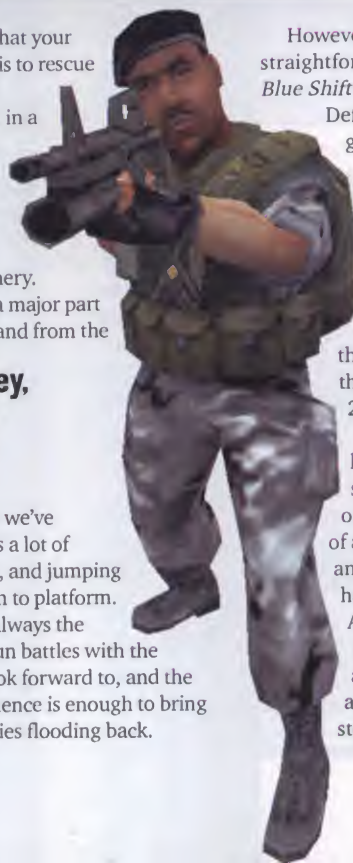
security guard you encountered as Gordon in the original. Confused? You should be, although if you've seen *Pulp Fiction* and dealt with the time-splitting narrative you should be OK.

There are no new weapons or new alien races to contend with (you're playing the same events as the original), but the line on *Blue Shift* has

preview code we've played there's a lot of sliding crates, and jumping from platform to platform. Still, there's always the great huge gun battles with the soldiers to look forward to, and the opening sequence is enough to bring great memories flooding back.

However, it's more than just a straightforward mission pack, *Blue Shift* also contains the High Definition pack that upgrades graphics and animations throughout the game, which means that once you've finished wandering around new areas of the complex asking people to show their passes, you can effectively play through the original and the *Opposing Force* add-on 2001 remixes.

So the legacy of *Half-Life* lives on, and curiously it shows absolutely no sign of abating. If this number of add-ons was released for any other game fans would have switched off in droves. As it is, I'm going to finish *Blue Shift* in one sitting and then start on the original all over again. No one can stop me. [E]



STILL HERE

NEWS EDITOR-AT-LARGE Mark Hill



Here's a warning for all you wannabe games journalists. Yes you, the ones who email us constantly with

the subject heading "Gizza job", the ones who think we're rubbish and that you could do better, the ones who manage an extraordinary rate of spelling mistakes per word.

Don't do it. It is said that Robert Johnson, the legendary blues guitarist, sold his soul to the devil in exchange for talent and success. Well, at least he created beautiful music, but what would you get in return for giving up your immortal spirit to *PC ZONE*? A sticky keyboard on a desk no one else wanted and the chance to pretend to play games all day while you actually spend the rest of your life staring into the empty eyes of your co-workers, being insulted in online forums and dreaming of the outside world. Of course, I'm exaggerating slightly for effect, but consider my case. Last month I announced my intention to leave the *ZONE* dungeon to enter the paradisiacal world of freelance liberty (ie a reclusive and sleepless existence of begging for work and wondering when the next cheque will arrive). And here I am again telling you all the latest from the rosy world of computer gaming entertainment.

OK, so I may be lying on an exclusive Caribbean island, feeling a warm breeze coming from the crystal blue purity of the ocean, while beautiful women bring me chilled beers and try to persuade me to oil their perfectly rounded shoulders, tapping these words into a laptop instead of crouching in a darkened corner of the *ZONE* office. But still they hold my soul in their hands, still they dangle that parchment I signed in blood so long ago.

Still, news, eh? It's a laugh, isn't it? Oh, look, there's some new games over there. Go and look at them. Now. Leave. Please. Go away. I beg you.

PLAYING FIELDS

Check out the finest gaming bar in existence

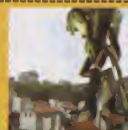
P:19 *The PlayingFields*



THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out, up and down

P:22



chartTrack

BLACK ISLE LETS RIP

The people behind *Planescape: Torment* take RPGs to a new level with *Torn*

★ Black Isle Studios • ETA 2002 • tom.blackisle.com

Black Isle has managed to become the number one producer of PC role-playing games in the world, thanks to *Baldur's Gate*, *Planescape: Torment* and, to a lesser extent, *Icwind Dale*. It's not surprising then that *Neverwinter Nights*, its next release, has been the cause of much expectation among fans. Its current project, *Torn*, looks set to give fans even more to celebrate, with much of the talent that made *Planescape* so brilliant working hard to create a new RPG dynasty.

Black Isle has decided to take the risk of dispensing with the popular AD&D license in this case, and has based *Torn* in a fantasy land of its own creation, Agathe. The playing arena will be huge – although apparently it is only a fraction of the Agathe world, hinting at a good few sequels should *Torn* prove successful – and has its own highly-detailed history and culture of factions, philosophies and religions.

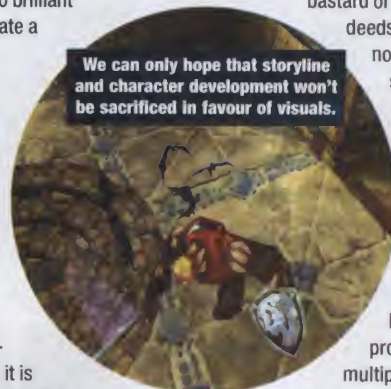
There are few details on the story, except that you'll create a character using a version of the *Fallout* S.P.E.C.I.A.L. System, choosing skills (including traits and perks) to make him or her unique. You will then roam the land of Agathe trying to rid yourself of a curse that brings misfortune wherever you go. Not unlike *The Nameless One* in *Planescape: Torment*, then. You'll be able to play the game in any way you choose, as an evil

bastard or an angel of good deeds. As you may have

noticed from the screenshots, *Torn* leaves behind the 2D engine that has served Black Isle so well in the past and implements a modified version of the fantastic LithTech system.

Black Isle is promising an intense multiplayer experience, but our real hopes are that it can come close to the marvellous single-player story of *Planescape*, with the same witty narrative and as many sub-quests. We'll let you know as soon as we can.

We can only hope that storyline and character development won't be sacrificed in favour of visuals.



This marks yet another step forward for the hugely successful Black Isle Studios.



The game is still at its early stages, but you see where it's aiming to go.



The LithTech engine is a powerful tool; we can't wait to see the results in motion.

AGE OF EMPIRES III

Ensemble's next RTS epic

P.18



MAN WHO KNOWS

The latest industry gossip

P.18



PCZONE READER AWARDS 2001

The votes are in, the recounts are over. Find out what your games of the year were.

P.24



PAYNE & PLEASURE

One of the hottest and most delayed PC titles ever is back on track

★ 3D Realms • ETA July 2001 • www.maxpayne.com

Max Payne has been in development for longer than anyone cares to remember, and, were it not for a series of unbelievable screenshots and movies released last summer, the game would have been filed next to *Daikatana* in the Why Did They Bother drawer.

A few months ago there were even rumours circulating wildly over the Net that Max Payne was going to be cancelled. Fortunately, this wasn't true, and was largely due to the media

blackout that 3D Realms is so fond of (*Duke Nukem Forever* is so tightly under wraps that the programmers are having to work with their eyes closed).

The game is an all-action third-person super-production that tries to translate the big John Woo slow-motion shoot-outs to the PC screen. The story is a typically brainless yarn, seen everywhere from *The Punisher* to old Clint Eastwood movies.

Max Payne is a young New York cop who sees his family

brutally murdered by a gang of junkies hooked on the new drug Valkyr, which is sweeping the town like a plague.

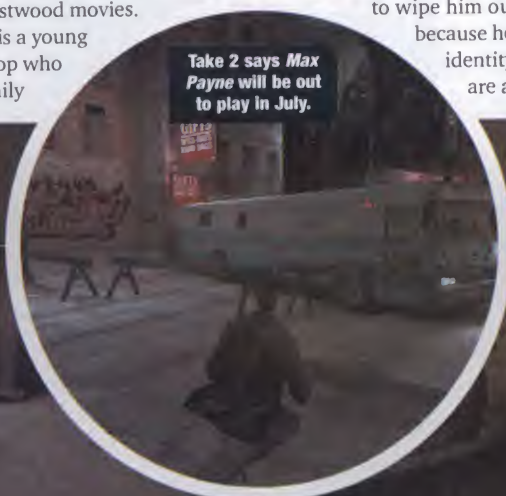
The only way to root out the origin of the drug is to infiltrate the Big Apple's mafia organisation, and Max is chosen as the man for the job. The only person who knows Max's real identity is then murdered, leaving him exposed to the gangs who want to wipe him out. And because he's lost his identity the police are after him too.

Apparently comic strips will be used to propel the story rather than cinematic cut-scenes, but the sheer cutting edge of the game should more than make up for that. There are 15 different weapons (including the usual machine guns and assault rifles) with which to paint the town red and, considering how disturbingly gloomy the game's futuristic New York looks, that's exactly what you'll want to do. Expect this one to get an 18 rating. As long as it hits the shelves soon, we don't really care.

3D Realms is promising a high level of environment interactivity, so it won't all be shoot, shoot, shoot.



Take 2 says Max Payne will be out to play in July.



There won't be any multiplayer mode, but there will be editors released for people to make their own mods.



SEQUEL OF FORTUNE

Everybody's favourite gun fetish game is back

★ Raven Software • ETA late 2001 • www.ravensoft.com

We admit to being prejudiced when *Soldier Of Fortune* first arrived in our office about a year and a half ago. Our liberal beliefs couldn't help but clash with a game based on a redneck magazine that advocates the use of guns by everyone in the US – including school children – and preaches on America's right to trample on every other country.

It represents everything we hate about Uncle Sam, especially now that another Bush has wriggled himself into the White House. As for the game itself, it seemed like nothing but mindless violence with right-wing overtones. Yet, despite all this, we couldn't help agreeing that it was

damn good fun to play. Now, like every other successful shoot 'em up ever released, *SOF* is about to get the sequel treatment.

Soldier Of Fortune 2 will use the *Quake III* engine, allowing it to maximise the sickeningly violent gore, mutilation and dismemberment it's so famous for. The other big news is that the enemies will get a lot smarter, benefiting from the same system that powered *Elite Force*'s AI. The story this time involves the elimination of some Russian scientists developing biochemical weapons, but who cares anyway? One bit of bad news is that there will be no multiplayer. No great loss as far as we're concerned.



The sequel will retain the rather disturbing focus on bloody and explosive kills.

NEVERWINTER OF OUR CONTENT

★ Bioware • Q1 2002 • www.bioware.com

The latest on one of the most exciting upcoming RPGs

Role-playing games are big business these days, and they don't come much bigger than *Neverwinter Nights*. Bioware, the *Baldur's Gate* developer, has really gone to town with its latest title, not least in the graphical area, which now boasts some very impressive 3D visuals. To give you an idea of the vast scope of the game, Bioware first started designing it four years ago and have been working full-time on it for two years. The setting is the Forgotten Realms, the same world *BG* took place in, this time in the Northern Sword Coast region, if that means anything to you.

The single-player game promises to be every bit as involving as *Baldur's Gate* and its sequel was, and will focus heavily on combat and exploration. Your role as an initially inexperienced adventurer is to investigate a plague that is sweeping the Neverwinter kingdom. Since you're one of the few not to have succumbed to the illness, you're enlisted to find a cure. Naturally this involves travelling to far off lands and completing several sub-quests along the way.

In multiplayer, the game recreates the original Advanced Dungeons & Dragons as experienced with a group of friends sitting round a table, throwing dice and pretending to cast spells of invisibility while still clearly taking up two chairs. There'll be a remote Dungeon Master guiding the story and ensuring gameplay is always optimised for all the players. *Neverwinter* includes a scenario editor to make these games even richer and more customised. The good news for non-online players is that they can also be used to create more downloadable single-player adventures. This really is one of the most mouth-watering prospects in development and, if you're an RPG fan, you should keep your eyes peeled as we bring you all the latest exclusive information.



ONLY SKITTLES HAVE THE ANSWER

★ Simon & Schuster • ETA October • www.simonsays.com

Games turn to American sweet commercials for inspiration

Who says Americans are superficial? One of their favourite teeth-eroding sweets is Skittles, and now Simon & Schuster is basing a new action/fantasy game on it. To be fair, *Skittles: Darkened Sky* is based on the adverts and set in an EverQuestian world of fantasy and magic rather than on the sweets themselves, though these do play an important role in the game. It might seem dubious to actually include the candy's name in the title – although we doubt it will be marketed

as such in Europe – but the company's reasoning is that most US hardcore gamers spend all day playing on their PCs and stuffing Skittles down their bloated necks. A charming marketing strategy, you must admit.

Set across five different worlds, *Darkened Sky* mixes classic *Tomb Raider* action – complete with fit, non-Skittles eating bird – with magic in a *Heretic II* kind of blend. To be able to cast spells you must carry a certain number and certain colour of Skittles,

although you can resort to beating your enemies with a staff if you'd rather follow a sugar-free gameplay. As always, there's an element of adventure and puzzles solving, and Simon & Schuster is promising to deliver more than the rudimentary key-finding and stone-pushing tricks. There also loads of scripted events and dialogue with the all the characters that populate the Skittle world. Apparently it's meant to be funny, but we'll believe that when we see it.



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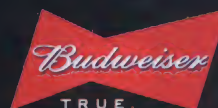
amazon.co.uk

buy.com

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TGPPCZONE

The Man who KNOWS

FAKE ARSE REVEALED

Following months of fevered speculation, it has finally been confirmed that **Angelina Jolie** did use a body double for nude scenes in the forthcoming *Tomb Raider* film. The rubber-lipped actress, 25, confessed that her flaccid arse cheeks were not suitable for public consumption, admitting: "I smoked a lot and drank too much and was out of shape." In the absence of Jolie's saggy rear, the pert cleft of erstwhile Page Three stunna **Lisa Bangert** will instead appear on the screen (as will the jism of a million teenage boys). This story actually surfaced a few months ago, but has been recycled as the ruthless publicity push for the film begins in earnest ahead of the July 6 release date. As part of a frankly vulgar marketing campaign, **Paramount Pictures** has signed several multimillion dollar deals with a diverse array of multinational companies, including **Pepsi-Cola**, **NBC**, **Ericsson**, **Land Rover** and **Taco Bell**, purveyors of quality Mexican fast food. Expect to have the film relentlessly punched into your brain on a daily basis in the coming months, starting with a forthcoming **Channel 5** documentary on the **Lara Croft** phenomenon. Despair.

The proposed **Duke Nukem** film is also gathering pace, with rumours that **WWF** wrestler, **The Rock**, may play the titular cigar-chewing hero. Despite sightings of the **Duke Nukem Forever** game proving rarer than rocking-horse shit, the live action movie has been confirmed. Producer **Dimension Films** is hoping that it will emulate the success of **Men In Black** and **The Mummy**, the sequel to which also features **The Rock**, whose acting talent has been compared to that of the mighty **Hulk Hogan**.

In music news, the drummer from **The Police** has written the theme tune for **Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare**. Long-faced **Stewart Copeland** composed and produced the song, which will be heard during the intro of the game and again over the end credits. According to **Infogrames**, the theme song combines hard-edged rhythmic riffs with electronic effects. **Sting** has yet to break his silence on his former colleague's project, but is believed to be entirely indifferent.

Robbie Williams is to star in a game, albeit of the type that you download from the Internet, play for five minutes and then never look at again. The platform romp is available from Williams' official website and involves guiding **The Robster** through various landscapes trying to collect as many girls as possible, as seen in his video. Rumours of a secret level where he inadvertently rips their anal tissue have as yet proved unfounded.

The non-stop marathon of showbiz parties continued apace, with **Virgin Interactive** hosting a star-studded bash to celebrate the release of another **Worms** game. Despite coinciding with a Tube strike, literally dozens of people found their way to **East London** to stand around in someone's office quaffing warm beer and picking at day-old sandwiches. Among the unbridled revelry, erstwhile TV personality **Normski** was spotted 'getting jiggy wi'd it'. The game's getting hard.



George Stobbart has turned into a blue-eyed beefcake.

SWORD STILL BROKEN

★ ETA 2002 • Revolution Software • www.brokensword3.com

The Sleeping Dragon is the latest Broken Sword instalment

We don't really count ourselves among them, but we know that the *Broken Sword* series has a lot of fans. No doubt they'll be ecstatic to hear that Revolution Software has announced the return of the most spineless and insipid of adventurers, George Stobbart, in *Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon*. Brought up as we are on hilarious LucasArts adventures, the *Broken Sword* serious approach has never sat too well next to the antics of Sam and Max of *Monkey Island*, but perhaps our biggest problem with the series has always been the annoying main character. The good news is that George seems to have undergone quite a change

since *The Smoking Mirror* and now looks more like a 1940s comic book action hero than a brainless American backpacker. Revolution is also bringing the technology bang up to date, and the game will be appearing on the Xbox and PS2 as well as PC. Although no story details have been revealed as yet, the tone of the game is said to be darker, in the style of a hard-boiled crime thriller with the feel of a Hollywood action film. Since we hated the colourful Tintin look of the earlier games, this is also a welcome surprise. The adventure elements will be expanded with stealth and action in a fully 3D environment, so there's plenty to look forward to.



At least Ensemble are not completely discarding the historical approach.



Egyptian soldiers do battle with a sea monster with the help of some... creatures.

THE THIRD ENSEMBLE

★ Ensemble Studios • ETA TBA • www.ensemblestudios.com

The first images to the follow-up to Age Of Empires II are here

As if last month's news that Ensemble was working on *Star Wars: Battlefronts* wasn't enough, the company has just released a couple of screenshots of its next project. The code name for the game is *RTSIII* – suggesting that it follows where *Age II* left off – and it's looking mighty gorgeous. As you can see, this time round Ensemble has gone for a 3D engine and has dispensed with the historical background. Instead there seems to be a mishmash of mythologies (in the true

tradition of the *Xena* or *Hercules* TV shows). There have already been disgruntled postings online by hardcore fans incensed that their fact-based strategy has gone for a fantasy setting, but the developer has insisted that the core of the *Age Of Empires* gameplay will still be there. But we all know what happened when *Total Annihilation* went for fantasy with *Kingdoms*. Will *RTSIII* be a match for *Empire Earth*? Considering the talent at Ensemble, we have no doubts that it will.

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Exciting, isn't it?

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta*

Force: Land Warrior, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA Geforce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (right) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.

Turn to page 98 for details of the **PC ZONE** Readers' Challenge.



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✶ This discount slip entitles one person to play for one hour free of charge on one occasion between May 4 and May 31 2001, at The Playing Fields, 143 Whitfield Street, London W1, UK. You must be 14 years of age or older in order to participate in this offer. The slip must be filled in correctly and must be the original from a copy of *PC ZONE*, otherwise it will not be valid. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer. Only one slip per reader per issue.

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SPIDERMAN SWINGS TO PC

★ Neversoft • ETA autumn • www.neversoft.com

The radioactive hero breaks free from consoles

PlayStation owners have been enjoying him for ages and the Dreamcast version is well underway, so we were starting to feel left out of all the *Spiderman* goodness. Finally, Activision has

announced that the web-slinging superhero is to make an appearance on our grey boxes. If you're wondering what the big deal is and why we should get excited about what is likely to be a console port, remember Neversoft is the developer who made *Tony Hawk's 2*. The skateboarding masterpiece is one of the best console-to-PC translations we've ever seen and made full use of the PC's higher capabilities. There's no reason to think otherwise about *Spiderman*. No details have been released as yet, but we're betting the fantastic wallcrawling and the assortment of familiar villains will be there, together with Peter Parker's constant wisecracks. And the feeling of swinging through a city should be even greater on a PC. More news when we have it.



The world's favourite superhero finally makes it to the PC.

THE INNER JOURNEY

★ Fin Arts • ETA June • www.bacteria-game.com

Bacteria looks deep inside you

The body is a wondrous thing, offering wilder landscapes than any *EverQuest* world and more perilous adventures than deep space. At least it does in *Bacteria*. Inspired by the 1966 film *The Fantastic Voyage*, in which a group of scientists are miniaturised and inserted into the body of a dying man *Bacteria* features full-blown action battles through veins, heart valves and other anatomical

settings. You control a miniaturised craft intent on destroying a disease that is killing a scientist. The missions will include arterial races, collecting organic samples and destroying viruses. The experience will be arcadey rather than a complex medical space combat sim and developer Fin Arts claims the craft will be easier to manoeuvre than the one in *Descent*. We shall have to wait and see.



What the hell is that? It doesn't look like a red globule to me.



I bet you never knew your insides could be so colourful.



Resurrection: not the most original game.

SPANISH HACKS

★ Nebula Entertainment • ETA TBA • www.web.jet.es/wisefox

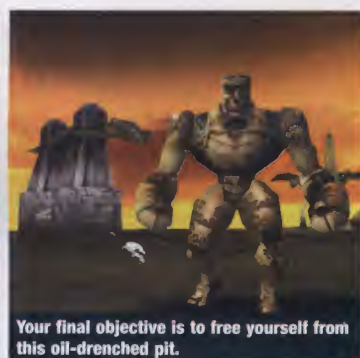
More hack 'n' slash from Spain with Resurrection

Following the success of Rebel Act Studios' *Severance: Blade Of Darkness*, its compatriot Nebula Entertainment is working on another third-person action/adventure with a heavy emphasis on swords, axes and gratuitous gore. Controls will work similarly to those in *Severance*, but with a greater number of console-style combination moves available to those willing to practise them. You also have three different characters to choose, each one with different attack moves. One of them, Domenico, is a

vampire, with the ability to crawl on walls and ceiling. His missions place a greater importance on stealth and should ensure the gameplay is richer and more varied than that of *Severance*. Rather than playing through the game with one character though, you'll be able to switch between them. One area in which *Severance* has the upper hand though is in the graphics department, they're nowhere near as impressive and polished in *Resurrection*. We're hoping Nebula still has work to do on them.



Your units are with you permanently and you can upgrade them in full RPG fashion.



Your final objective is to free yourself from this oil-drenched pit.

ROBOT WARS

★ Strategy First • ETA September • www.strategyfirst.com

44th century bots battle it out in Nexagon: The Pit

It's been done to death but that doesn't stop Strategy First from doing it again, only better. *Nexagon* is set in the 44th century, where entertainment is found in gladiatorial arenas serving as the battleground for groups of robots. Craig Charles doesn't provide the commentary, but the underlying idea is still bound to find favour among the niche that spends nights in their shed bashing pieces of metal with circuit board. The gameplay is a mix of RPG

and, mostly, real-time strategy. Every battle is broadcast over a holonet, so it's not enough to beat your opponents, you have to entertain the audience too. There are certain objectives you can complete to accomplish this, although general mayhem is usually to everyone's taste. The environment is fully 3D and also completely destructible, a feature that should add depth to your tactics as you bash down a wall to throw at enemy robots or blow up a hole in which to hide.

HARBOR DOGFIGHTS

★ ASAP Games • ETA May • www.simonsays.com

WWII flight combat returns with **Pearl Harbor: Zero**

Presumably developed to coincide with this summer's big blockbuster movie, *Pearl Harbor* looks like a much more modest affair. Although all the aircraft are realistically recreated, the action is pure arcade, almost a 3D version of the classic 1942. You'll be able to blow up Japanese planes and boats through a series of historical battles – like

the Battle Of Midway and Guadalcanal – as well as re-enacting the defence of Pearl Harbor. There are ten missions in all, and you can choose from 14 aircraft with which to dive-bomb and dogfight. The game is set to receive a budget release by Simon & Schuster, but let's hope it doesn't score highly enough to warrant another *Serious Sam* situation (see page 49).



Hardcore flight sim fanatics need not apply, this is for the trigger-happy set.



Fahrenheit: It's a paranormal thriller, apparently.

THE NOMAD TEMPERATURE

★ ASAP Games • ETA May • www.simonsays.com

The French are heating up

Quantic Dream, the French developer who brought us the rather brilliant and over-ambitious *The Nomad Soul*, are continuing their innovative ways with *Fahrenheit*. The game is to be the first in a series of episodic adventures, featuring the trademark 3D worlds, combat and puzzle-solving with a touch of *X-Files* weirdness. The details are slightly fuzzy and it could turn out to be a pretentious load of bull or, if we're lucky, a work of genius. We'll keep you posted.

ZEUS AT SEA

★ Impressions Games • ETA August • zeus.impressionsgames.com

Whatever floats your boat

The childish follow-up to the *Caesar* and *Pharaoh* series, *Zeus: Master Of Olympus* is to get an expansion pack, in the usual tradition of developer Impressions. The add-on pack is called *Poseidon* and, as you'd expect, puts you in the role of the Greek god of the sea. The main attraction is the possibility of building the fabled city of Atlantis in all its aquatic glory, although the game looks set to continue the cartoonish simplicity of *Zeus*.

Baldur's Gate II Throne of Bhaal

CONTINUE YOUR QUEST...

CONTINUE THE COMPELLING SAGA OF BALDUR'S GATE™ II TO ITS ULTIMATE CONCLUSION AS YOU FULFIL YOUR DESTINY AS THE CHILD OF BHAAL.

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CAST NEW HIGH LEVEL SPELLS AS YOUR CHARACTERS CLIMB AS HIGH AS THE 40TH LEVEL AND GAIN POWERFUL NEW ABILITIES.

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... AND COMPLETE THE EPIC SAGA.

FULFIL YOUR DESTINY
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Dungeons & Dragons



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CHARTS

All you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what you think

THE megastores TOP 10

APR	MAY	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	BLACK AND WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
NE	2	COSSACKS: THE EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%
2	3	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
3	4	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
NE	5	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
7	6	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
6	7	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
NE	8	THE SIMS: COLLECTOR'S EDITION	MAXIS	EA	N/A
RE	9	C&C: RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
NE	10	SETTLER IV	BLUE BYTE	UBI SOFT	83%

Black & White. Towering above the opposition.

THE TOP 10

APR	MAY	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
NE	1	BLACK AND WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
NE	2	COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%
NE	3	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
4	4	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
2	5	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
5	6	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
1	7	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
NE	8	SETTLERS IV	BLUE BYTE	UBI SOFT	83%
6	9	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
NE	10	THE SIMS/THE SIMS LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	N/A

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 2000)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

Nice to see some good games at the top of the chart for a change, but that's not surprising considering the hype that's surrounded *B&W*. *Cossacks* has done well for itself, though. However, I know it's customary to be shocked at *The Sims* and *Millionaire*? and all the other commercial rubbish the uninformed masses buy... but *The Sims* is taking up four slots for goodness' sake. The bloody game is taking up nearly half the chart – how could people still be buying it? Are people just buying it again for effect? Idiots. Idiots, everywhere.

TreBlue

At last, nice to see a few good games in the chart, (no names mentioned), but when are people going to stop buying *The Sims*? There must be loads of people with three copies each by now.

caz_zer

It's nice to see change, but in a year's time, when there are four *Black & White* games in the charts, will we be just as disappointed as we are with *The Sims* now? It's more than likely.

Martin Brentnall

Whaaat? *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*? 7th? I mean *Black & White*, *Cossacks*, *CM*, and *Half-Life* are good, but 7th? Hehehe I wish I could see Chris Tarrant now... crying, hopefully.

JakobG

What a surprise. *Black & White* at number one. Good riddance (sort of) to *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*. But *The Sims*, love it or hate it, just refuses to go away.

Psychosi

CHART COMMENT

BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

I honestly give up. There are all these amazing games out there, just waiting to be discovered by the masses, and what happens? People just keep on buying *The Sims* and all of the add-on packs and all of the add-on packs for the add-on packs and so on and so forth. And if it's not an add-on pack, then it's the inevitable sequel, with *Champ Manager* and *Settlers IV* being the culprits this month. Meanwhile, the likes of *Severance*, *Hostile Waters* and *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* are all languishing far behind. At least there are two redeeming features this month in the charts, notably *Black & White* and *Cossacks: European Wars*. Well done consumers, best work in months.

Martin Korda

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

- 1 *Star Wars: Force Commander* (Activision)
- 2 *Soldier Of Fortune* (Activision)
- 3 *The Sims* (EA)
- 4 *F1 2000* (EA)
- 5 *Star Trek: Armada* (Activision)

2 YEARS AGO...

- 1 *Championship Manager 3* (Eidos)
- 2 *Civilization: Call To Power* (Activision)
- 3 *TOCA 2: Touring Cars* (Codemasters)
- 4 *Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance* (Activision)
- 5 *RollerCoaster Tycoon* (Hasbro)

5 YEARS AGO...

- 1 *Duke Nukem 3D* (US Gold)
- 2 *Civilization* (Microprose)
- 3 *Theme Park* (EA)
- 4 *Command & Conquer* (Virgin)
- 5 *Encarta* (Microsoft)

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

PC ZONE and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:

QUESTION: Who is the creator of *Black & White*?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

Name/address/postcode/daytime phone number/email address/job title/company name/age if under 18.

Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.

Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

Answers on a postcard to: PC ZONE Chart Compo (CPCZ0501A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: May 30, 2001.

Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

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ETA: June 2001

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PCZONE

READER AWARDS 2001

Taking the *ZONE* reviewers out of the equation, who's best placed to say whether a game's any cop? Despite their protestations to the contrary, it's not the developers, and it's certainly not the PR people that hawk their wares. Oh no. The real heroes of the piece are you, the people that actually go out and spend your hard earned cash on games, ensuring that developers keep on developing bigger and better things, and producing enough titles to keep us in the luxurious jobs we have become accustomed to. Thanks.



GAME OF THE YEAR WINNER: DEUS EX

THERE WAS ONLY EVER ONE REAL contender for this category. For many, Warren Spector's genre crossbreed finally nudged *Half-Life* off the top of the Best Games Ever list and, while that may be debatable, there's no denying its irresistible force of unparalleled story depth, freedom of gameplay and sheer quality. You can't please all of the people all of the time, but *Deus Ex* has a damned good try nonetheless. It may have won the role-playing game category, but it could just as easily have appeared as a first-person shooter or action/adventure. It seamlessly blends game styles, and drinks as deeply from *Thief*, *System Shock 2* and any defining game ever made (*Legend Of Zelda* on the N64, for example) as it does from *Half-Life*. It is the opposite of a game-on-rails, allowing you to develop your character, complete your missions and dictate the storyline like no game ever before. Some people carried on playing to see where the, admittedly derivative, sci-fi conspiracy plot was going to go next, others got lost in the wealth of detail that made its alternate universe so believable, or wanted to explore all the possibilities your character's skills

allowed. A big group probably wanted nothing more than to build up JC Denton's stats as far as they could go in true *Diablo* fashion, while yet others were in it for the mindless violence, missing all the subtleties but getting quite handy with a flame-thrower. This truly is a masterful piece of entertainment.

Not that *Deus Ex* wasn't up against some pretty stiff competition. The massive and wonderful *Baldur's Gate II* got a fair share of votes, as did the perennial ZONE favourite *Championship Manager* (in its 00/01 incarnation) and *Shogun: Total War*. At least *Shogun* got the strategy award. *BG II* suffered the humiliation of being beaten to the RPG crown, despite being a much more traditional and full-on role-playing game. And *Champ Man* shocked us all by walking away empty-handed, beaten in the Sports category by the more athletic *Tony Hawk's 2*. Well, at least they sold lots of copies.

RUNNERS-UP

Baldur's Gate II
Championship Manager 00/01
Shogun: Total War



← BEST SIMULATION

WINNER: B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH



THOUGH TO MANY IT may seem a dying genre, 2000 wasn't short on the odd quality simulation and for Formula 1 racing fans, *Geoff Crammond's F1 Grand Prix 3* must certainly have been a godsend. But it wasn't the best on offer, as evident in your votes, with flight games again ruling the roost.

Considering the game never arrived in the UK, Vicarious Visions' ultra-realistic space combat and trading game *Terminus* did well to pick up a fair few votes, though Microsoft's *StarLancer* managed to beat it easily into submission. But this year it was the real-world combat sims that picked up the most votes, with the superb *B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth* well ahead of Microsoft's

other contender *Combat Flight Sim 2*.

In terms of graphics, attention to detail and realism, *B-17* was easily head and shoulders above everything else on offer. But it's easy to forget that *B-17* was much more than a hardcore flight simulation. With the option to play as pilot, navigator, bombardier or gunner, *B-17* went so far as to allow you to fly escort, or even take on the giant *Flying Fortresses* themselves in German aircraft. But it was the option to manage, not only an entire crew, but a whole squadron of bombers and crew that made *B-17* stand out. Planning missions – not only to put an end to WWII – but also in the hope that as many young airmen would make it through to the

RUNNERS-UP

Combat Flight Sim 2

StarLancer

Terminus

end. Detractors may say *B-17* was little more than a WWII RPG, but it was exactly this angle that made it special and not only was *B-17* the best flight sim of last year, it was the most original. If you missed it first time around, we urge to pick up a copy as soon as you can. It could be some time before something like this appears again.

BEST SPORTS GAME

WINNER: TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

INTRODUCING OUR WINNER, from Activision and weighing in at 53 per cent of the votes – it is the *PC ZONE* Readers' Sports Game of the year – *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*. Who'd have thought that the practice of skating round a park on a plank with four wheels stuck to the bottom of it would ever catch on as a popular pubescent pastime, let alone influence an award-winning computer game? However, somehow it's managed to catch the imagination of the world, with films such as '80s classic *Back To The Future* and coverage on Sky Sports enhancing its popularity no end. And with so many of you voting for it as your number one sports game of the year, it's obvious that the sport's popularity is higher than ever. Either that or it's just a bloody excellent game.

One of the surprise packages of last year, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* took

the PC by storm. No one thought it would translate well from the console, and yet just about every PC owner who played it was hooked after just a couple of minutes. The tricks you can pull off are only limited by your imagination, and you soon come to realise that *Tony Hawk's* involves far more than doing the occasional spin or jump. There's even a fantastic editor, which lets you create the park of your dreams.

As a result, *ZONE* favourite and Steve Hill's reason for living, *Championship Manager 00/01* was beaten into second place, above this year's variation of *FIFA* and surprise package *Open Tennis*, a game which caused us (briefly) to drop *Quake III*, and concentrate on returning each other's balls.



RUNNERS-UP

Championship Manager 00/01

FIFA 2001

Open Tennis 2000

DEVELOPER

WINNER: ION STORM

WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT we were somewhat surprised when last year you nominated both LucasArts and Westwood in this category, both studios under par throughout 1999. This year however, with Bioware, Creative Assembly, Sports Interactive and Ion Storm, on paper at least, the choice for the eventual winner must have been that much more difficult with both Creative Assembly and Sports Interactive deserving of their Classic awards for *Shogun: Total War* and *Championship Manager – Season 00/01* respectively. Bioware weren't too slack either, squeezing out the commendable *MDK 2* and, easily last year's most hour-sapping game, *Baldur's Gate II*.

However, understandable and bizarre at the same time, the winners of the Best Developer category have traditionally been voted hand-in-hand with the Best Publisher. Last year it was bedfellows Valve and Sierra who scooped the double and this year it was Eidos' money pit Ion Storm. All the

BEST STRATEGY GAME

WINNER: SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

ROUTING THE OPPOSITION IN the Strategy category was Creative Assembly's epic RTS, *Shogun: Total War*. It amassed more than 50 per cent of the votes, proving that its luscious 3D graphics and epic battles are the way forward for the genre. The old school of RTS, with its isometric viewpoints and small battles was firmly put in its place by this result, with *C&C: Red Alert 2* and *Sudden Strike* putting up about as much resistance as a bowl of custard.

To this day, *Shogun* remains unsurpassed by any other RTS game (if you ignore *Black and White* that is). Allowing you to command literally thousands of troops at a time, it was the first game to bring truly mammoth battles to our computer screens. The scenery in each map is nothing short of breathtaking, with rolling hills, valleys and rivers stretching seamlessly into the distance. The beautifully rendered landscapes can be viewed from any angle with the moveable camera, giving you a genuine idea of how each terrain type can assist you in defeating the enemy.

The near-endless tactical choices, variable weather effects and an excellent selection of units propel the game to even greater heights. There are few more sphincter-contracting experiences than watching 100 heavy cavalry men materialising from dense fog and charging down a mountain towards your position. The noise of their hooves swell ever louder in your ears before being drowned out by the enemy's battle cries and the death screams of your soldiers. In fact, it's just like being there, only there's not as much risk of getting your bollocks cut off by a rabid samurai warrior, which is always a bonus. *Shogun: Total War* was a worthy winner, and hopefully this result will encourage other RTS developers to follow its example and ambition in the near future.

RUNNERS-UP

C&C: Red Alert 2

Sudden Strike

The Sims



OF THE YEAR



more bizarre when you remember that unlike the other nominees, Ion Storm had far from a perfect record in 2000.

Who would have thought after the disastrous *Diakatana*, Ion Storm would bounce right back just two months later with *Deus Ex*, the former a first-person piece of crap, the latter a role-playing work of genius. Warren Spector again proving that along with Peter Molyneux, he is one of gaming's greatest visionaries. And the good news is that Ion Storm is sure to go from strength to strength, with both *Thief III* and *Deus Ex 2* on the way.

Far be it for us to second guess your reasons for voting Ion Storm Best Developer, but it was undoubtedly Warren Spector's *Unreal*-powered masterpiece that swung it. We hope.

RUNNERS-UP

BioWare

Creative Assembly

Sports Interactive

BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE

WINNER: ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

RUNNERS-UP

Nominees: Hitman: Codename 47

Giants: Citizen Kabuto

Alice



THERE'S A REASON TRADITIONAL adventure games don't sell anymore: publishers are too scared to release any. But when LucasArts finally decided to stop playing it safe with anaemic *Star Wars* games and take a chance on one of its most-loved adventure franchises, they proved everyone wrong in the process. It may not be up to the standard of LucasArts' old classics, but in a time when good scripts and intelligent humour have all but gone out of the window,

Escape From Monkey Island stands out like a shining beacon. Action/adventure is a broad genre though, encompassing games that bear little relation to *Monkey*. Last year all the games in contention were third-person action games (*Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*, *Nomad Soul*, *Resident Evil 2*) which mostly only hinted at the traditional puzzle-solving

gameplay pure adventure games offer. The success of *Monkey* is due as much to the lack of competition as it is to its quality. *Hitman* and *Giants* are great games, but they definitely fall on the action side of the slash. *Alice* falls into this category mostly because it is a platform game with narrative pretensions, and it is generally accepted that any game where you control a character from a third-person perspective gets shoved into the action/adventure compartment. You can probably blame Lara Croft's massive success and influence for this, but we won't hold it against her. The fact remains that most of the games in this section are wildly different from each other (unlike the FPS category for example, where all games are played from a first-person perspective and involve shooting things). It feels slightly unfair to judge a methodical urban assassination simulator like *Hitman* against an indefinable and surreal alien strategy game with shooter segments like *Giants*. At the end of the day, though, LucasArts got the votes, so let's hear it for the monkey.

← BEST RPG

WINNER: DEUS EX

RUNNERS-UP

Baldur's Gate II

Diablo II

Planescape: Torment

WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL role-playing game? Immersion in a new world, character development and strong narrative are three of the must-haves. In the past you'd also have spouted on about goblins, words with too many vowels in, apos'trophe marks in the wrong place and great huge swirling beards. However, over the past couple of years the traditional

fantasy setting for RPGs has been superseded by a more sleek and futuristic upstart. Last year *System Shock 2* took the first prize ahead of *Baldur's Gate*, *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest*, and this year it's the turn of its sort-of stable mate, *Deus Ex*.

We've talked at length about this masterpiece elsewhere in the awards, so there's not much else to be said,

except to point to the fact that RPGs can work in 3D. Technology might still be lagging somewhat, but *Deus Ex* proved you could take an FPS engine and craft a world that could be inhabited by believable characters and bound together by an amazing plot and multiple endings. And then some.

All of the other three nominations are taken from the land of the beardy-weirdy, with the fantabulous and epic *Baldur's Gate II* strolling into second, followed by *Planescape: Torment* and the hack 'n' slash epic, *Diablo II*.

Next year's award is going to be interesting because there are a lot of new massively multiplayer online games being launched this year, with the likes of *Anarchy Online* hitting the airwaves. Is the UK ready to start role-playing with others across the world? We hope so.



BEST DRIVING GAME

WINNER: COLIN MCRAE

WHEN YOU PLAY A DRIVING game do you want an all-out arcade romp, or a simulation where you have to spend as much time under the bonnet with your ratchets as you do turning the steering wheel left and right? Or do you want a combination of the two?

Judging by your votes you're torn between the mindless fun of *Midtown Madness 2* and the semi-realistic *Colin McRae 2*. Voting was so close on this that we had to do a couple of re-counts, and in a thrilling result that has more validity than the previous US election, the dour Scot triumphed (although judging by his recent performances, this is the only award Colin is going to be taking home to his wife this year).

Almost unfaultable, *Colin McRae 2* is quite simply one of the best driving games available on any platform. The physics, different track surfaces and real-time damage make it a thrill to play, and the learning curve is perfect,

leading you into an over-inflated view of your own abilities before turning the screw and leaving you staring at an ever-increasing time deficit. We haven't heard of anyone who hasn't played the game and fallen in love, and as well as this award the game also scooped first prize in our recent rally and off-road Supertest.

Grand Prix 3 was way behind the two main contenders, proving that realism isn't everyone's bag. There were also a lot of things that we felt the game could have improved on, and we're waiting for version 4 to deliver the much-anticipated online play, which could elevate it to the top of the podium. Also worth a mention is the fourth-placed *Insane*. Pushed as an online racer, *Insane* isn't bothered about realism but is a lot of fun to play. It's had us in hysterics before, and at £19.99 it's a real bargain.



RUNNERS-UP

Midtown Madness 2

Insane

Grand Prix 3

BEST PUBLISHER

WINNER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE

THE YEAR 2000 WAS A TOUGH one for the games industry as profits were squeezed and big-name games delayed. Despite this, one publishing house stood out from the rest with a roster of games that were unsurpassed across the world.

Founded in 1990, Eidos now employs more than 500 people worldwide and has access to more than 600 associated developers. At the heart of its success is Lara Croft and the *Tomb Raider* franchise, but in the year 2000 Lara was eclipsed by a number of topnotch titles that cemented Eidos' reputation as one of the leading providers of PC entertainment.

Among the games that Eidos released, *Project IGI*, *Thief II* and *Championship Manager* were all nominated in our Reader Awards, and *Project IGI* went on to win the best first-person shooter title. Steve Hill is still moaning on about the fact that *CM* won nothing.

BEST FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER



WINNER: PROJECT IGI

BIT OF AN ODD ONE THIS. WITH the big boys out of circulation for the year (*Quake III* and *Unreal Tournament* fought over last year's awards), there wasn't a stand-out winner in this category. And, unlike last year's multiplayer fragfest, all of the four short-listed games have made their impact based on single-player action. In fact, two of the four, *Project IGI* and *Thief II* don't have multiplayer options at all. So much for the death of the single-player game.

We're glad to see *Thief II* getting a mention. Despite the fact that it didn't sell very many copies in the UK, *Thief II* was, and still is, a fantastic game, although the emphasis is actually on stealth and avoiding violence wherever possible. Securing slightly more votes was *The Gunman Chronicles*, the latest add-on for *Half-Life*, which started out life as a free modification, before being spotted by the men in suits, placed in a

box and sold for cash money.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force is probably the game that best fits the first-person shooter category. Developed by masters of the genre Raven, it's still the best game based in the *Star Trek* universe (although that's not saying much). Our only complaint was that it was too short, and this is probably the single reason why it scored fewer votes than the overall winner *Project IGI*.

Part of the new breed of realistic shooters, *Project IGI* combines stealth and shooting in one neat package, with an engine that's capable of rendering huge outdoor maps and a sniper mode that's second to none. Not everyone got on with the game – it's one of the few titles that inspired letters of praise and disgust in equal measures – but it definitely tries to do something different and for that it should be applauded.

RUNNERS-UP

Gunman Chronicles
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force
Thief II: The Metal Age

EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

However, the one stand-out title of 2000 was *Deus Ex* and it's for this reason that Eidos is currently so popular. Taking a total of four awards, *Deus Ex*, penned by Warren Spector, was a masterpiece in gaming, and so good that you've obviously forgotten that you have Eidos to blame for *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* and its never-ending run at the top of the PC charts.

Activision came a pretty close second to Eidos, and deservedly so. Releasing consistently strong titles across the board, Activision will be back with even more clout next year with the imminent release of one of the most anticipated games of this year, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. Electronic Arts and its succession of updates also made a decent showing, and Bill Gates must be smiling into his Xbox at finally being recognised for software that's fun to use. You've obviously forgotten all about *Microsoft Soccer* then.

RUNNERS-UP

Activision
Microsoft
Electronic Arts

RUNNERS-UP

EverQuest
Ultima Online
Star Peace



BEST ONLINE GAME

WINNER: COUNTER-STRIKE

THIS WAS ABOUT AS ONE-SIDED AS TAKING

Manchester United out of the Premiership and putting them in a round robin against the local under-13s cub teams. The unfortunate also-rans included online beardies, *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online*, along with *SimCity* wannabe *Star Peace*, but the winner by a generous mile was *Counter-Strike*.

Surprise, surprise. It's a game that's literally taken the world by storm, and the *PC ZONE* office resounds every lunch time and every evening to the mantra "Go! Go! Go!"

What's its secret? More addictive than crack, it's actually a relatively simple mod, with two sides, one objective, and realistic weapons. The biggest draw is the fact that if you die you can't play again until the round is finished. The first popular game to introduce the masses to the concept that

death has consequences, *Counter-Strike* has taken such a firm grip on the world's population it's hard to point to a game that's going to unseat it. What's even better, the game is still free to download from the Internet, or you can pillage it from the cover CDs of this very organ, and you can't say fairer than that.

Constantly updated, and now up to Version 1.1, *Counter-Strike* isn't losing any of its converts and it's still attracting new addicts every day. If any more proof was needed, you'd only have to look to our Reader's Challenge. We've put ourselves on the line at a number of games, including the seminal *Virtual Pool 3*, but so far we've only had *Counter-Strike* offers. Surely some of you are playing something else? No? Oh come, we don't believe you.

BEST USE OF SOUND

WINNER: DEUS EX



RUNNERS-UP

Escape From Monkey Island
Thief II: The Metal Age
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

SOUND IS AN AREA THAT IS BEING

exploited more and more as developers begin to realise how important it is to the overall game experience, especially in terms of atmosphere. But it is also somewhat of a grey area, since there are so many aspects to it. If we're talking about music, we have to differentiate between the in-game, specially composed score, and the use of songs, just as in films. *Tony Hawk's 2* is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of the first games to take full advantage of a full soundtrack, with songs by Public Enemy, Rage Against The Machine and Papa Roach creating a perfect background for the skating action. It could also mean voice acting, an area in which *Escape From Monkey Island* just about runs away with. But

when people talk about sound in games they generally refer to the way the gameworld recreates a realistic audio frame in which to play, in the same way that we look for realistic physics in a racing game. One game in particular is responsible for making sound an integral part of the gameplay, and that is Looking Glass' *Thief*. This is a game where every surface has its own timbre, and where the slightest creak on a floorboard is likely to alert the guards in the next room to your presence. Sound works both ways, and your survival depends on listening to your enemies. In a way, it's a bit surprising that *Thief II* didn't take the prize. But, when you think about it, not that many people will have played it,

whereas most of you played and loved *Deus Ex*. And since *Deus Ex* borrows the use of sound for stealth purposes from *Thief* and integrates it into a much more rounded, satisfying game, you have to admit that it is a worthy winner.

MOST ORIGINAL GAME

WINNER: THE SIMS

YOU COULD ARGUE THAT THERE

is no originality in games anymore. But that would be bollocks. We can't expect developers to invent the wheel every time they work on a new project. All that we ask is an end to recycled ideas, cut and pasted from successful games. An end to pointless sequels that add nothing to the original except higher system requirements. An end to the kind of risk-free publishing that forces developers to come up with safe tried-and-tested formulas. It's good to see then, that there are still some out there willing to take chances on concepts that are not easy to market. Among the runner-ups, *Giants* is probably the most qualified to have

claims on originality. It's not just the cockney aliens either; it blends genres with great bravery and plants them on a bizarre landscape. *Deus Ex* is another title which takes elements we'd seen before and puts them together in a way we never had. *Counter-Strike*, on the other hand, is a simple idea (Terrorists vs Counter-Terrorists), perfectly executed. The winner by a big margin, though, is *The Sims*.

You could argue that it doesn't really take any chances at all, that it's a virtual doll's house you could let your kid sister play with, a harmless Tamagotchi riding on the success of all the *SimCity* spin-offs over the years. But you can't deny that Will Wright's

concept caught everyone's imagination when it first appeared and, although the annoying popularity of cynical cash-in add-ons has worn off all our enthusiasm, it really was a breath of fresh air. A more valid accusation is that the concept existed before, with *Little Computer People* on the Spectrum, but that would just be nit-picking. The big question is whether *The Sims II*, which Maxis has already started work on, will win the Most Original Game award in a couple of years' time. Not that they'll care, they're millionaires now.



RUNNERS-UP

Counter-Strike
Deus Ex
Giants: Citizen Kabuto

BEST USE OF GRAPHICS

WINNER: ALICE

AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR A NUMBER OF years, every few months graphics cards and the games made for them get better and better. The supposed photo-realistic games of old today look about as convincing as a copy of *The Beano* and even the visual treats of 1999 look old. But having better graphics cards, faster processors and more memory in your PC doesn't necessarily mean designers and developers are making the best use of your equipment. Graphics have to have a distinct style, move with fluidity and fit in with the game they aim to visualise.

But then you knew all that. Indeed in this category you all seemed to have picked up on the fact that gratuitous lens flare, real-time shadowing and realistic sphincter-synchronisation do not a great-looking game make, nominating as you did the beautifully atmospheric *Vampire: The Masquerade*, with its lush, gothic visuals and smooth, silky animation. But the eventual winner was a close-run battle between Interplay's *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* and EA's *Alice*, both of which hit the shelves just before Christmas.

Certainly *Giants* was awash with style, distinct humour and amazing colour. Indeed, we ourselves would have been hard pushed on deciding a winner. But it was the weird and wonderful *Alice* that ended up in graphical wonderland, taking the year-old *Quake III Arena* engine to new heights.

The game of course was a little disappointing, relying too heavily perhaps on *Tomb Raider*-style gameplay, but the graphics were stunning, offering the only one true vision of Lewis Carroll's *Wonderland*; weird and wonderful enemies populating bizarre and nightmarish landscapes. The man would have been proud.



RUNNERS-UP

Giants: Citizen Kabuto

Sacrifice

Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption

PC ZONE EDITOR'S AWARD

WINNER: PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

THIS IS WHERE WE SAY

bollocks to what you lot have said and vote for the game of 2000 that we think has been unfairly overlooked. Last year we gave the award to *Championship Manager*, and although Steve Hill has been threatening to quit unless we do the same again, we feel there's a more deserving case.

Planescape: Torment is an RPG in the same mould as the *Baldur's Gate* series, and a game that appeared almost out of nowhere only to become one of the best RPGs of all time. In fact, looking back on our score of 87 per cent we reckon we might have been a bit harsh, as the game gets better and better the more you play it.

Planescape's ascent into the echelons of greatness came about by word of mouth as much as the praise lavished on it in the gaming press. The sheer depth and intelligent narrative that characterised the game was simply mind-blowing. For the first time it really felt that the developers had nailed down the spirit of the dark and

decaying Forgotten Realms world, where walls give birth and coming back from the dead is a daily occurrence.

The gaming engine, although essentially the same AD&D saturated one used for *Baldur's Gate*, had been radically improved from the plot to the general look and feel of the game, oozing atmosphere from every dirt-clogged pore and giving *Planescape*

Torment a unique doom-laden atmosphere. The character development in *PT* was also rich and intelligently handled.

Actually, the real reason we loved it is that the lead character, looking like the dead love child of Bob Marley and Conan The Barbarian, took its name from our own Martin Korda, aka The Nameless One. Simple, really.



MAILBOX



Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

★ ANSWERED BY Dave Woods

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter Of The Month we'll send you a prize.

WRITE TO Mailbox, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk

CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at www.pczone.co.uk for further info.

SAVE OUR SIMS

Over the last few months I've noticed you can't stop sniping at *The Sims*. You have a go almost every chance you get. But it's been in the charts for more than a year for a reason, you know – people like it. You lump it in with *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*, forgetting the fact that this sold purely on TV hype. *The Sims* sells because it's actually different and it stands out amongst the glut of first-person yawns and *Command & Conquer* clones that fill the rest of the shelves. The fact it has been in the charts for so long suggests originality is still appreciated. Other developers might do well to take note of this.

RedActivist

★ Well said. Couldn't agree more. Turn to page 77 where you'll find Mark Hill lavishing praise over the latest add-on. Honestly.

NEW GAMES, PLEASE!

I was just wondering why it is that we seem to be going backwards with regards to first-person shooters. Take the

new *Wolfenstein* game. I know it started the whole thing off, but shouldn't the designers spend their time thinking of how they can make a completely new game? How about *Serious Sam*, or should I say *Doom 2001*? It just seems that the market is being flooded by games that have already been done – many of these done to (and beyond) death. And don't get me started on *Gunman Chronicles*, *Unreal 2*, *Hexen 2*, etc, etc, etc.

I don't mean to sound like a miserable git, it's just I like a game that makes me go: "Wow! That's new!" rather than: "Oh yeah, that again". Until the designers create a great, original FPS I will just go and lie down in a dark

"A lot of game players are young and, after splashing out £30 for a full price release, we can't afford to pay online charges"

PAUL BOLAND ISN'T HAPPY ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF PAY-PER-PLAY

room and remember the day I was given a box with the name *Half-Life* printed on it.

Paul Villers



★ We're all up for originality as well, but with a shooter this is going to come from a combination of technology (new engines) and

after splashing out £30 for a full price release, we can't afford to pay online charges on top. I'd love to try my hand at *EverQuest* or something similar, but I can't afford it. At the moment I can buy a single-player game, and if it comes with multiplayer options I can play them for free.

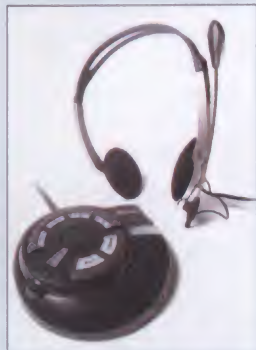
If the online gaming world becomes strictly pay-to-play, it will lose players. I enjoy the odd game of *Dungeon Keeper 2* online from time to time, but with added costs of a monthly fee to play, I'd stop playing it immediately. I agree that some form of compromise has to be put into place – we can't expect these people to work for free – but turning the whole online gaming scene into a paying scene could do it more harm than good.

Paul Boland

PAY-PER-PLAY #2

Quite simply, it's been a terrible few months for the online freewheelers. Freeloader is shutting up shop, Lycos is considering removing the free SMS texting service, online WAP browsers will no longer be free, Barrysworld (although eventually saved) looked doomed, ADSL is taking ages to be rolled out, cable hasn't arrived in my area and, totally unrelated, *Worms World Party* was a let-down.

SUPER PRIZES TO BE WON



PC ZONE is giving away not one, but two of these wonderful GameVoice contraptions from Microsoft to the writer of the Star Letter. If we don't consider any of the letters to be worthy we'll just keep them for ourselves. Using the GameVoice, you can communicate with other players online and give yourself a massive advantage over the Luddites who have to stop and type instructions. They cost £49.99 each and they're worth every single penny.

Forget the name and feast your eyes on the visuals. This game is going to rock.

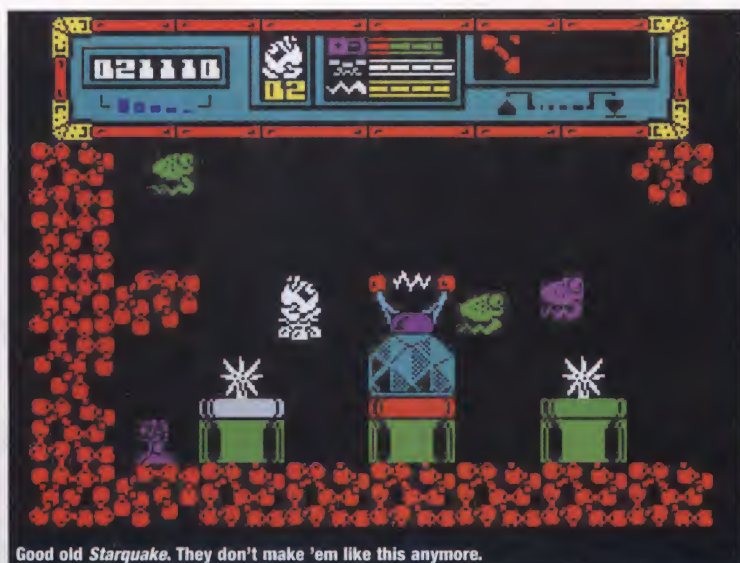


compelling narratives. Original films are only original because of their storyline, and this is where games are (hopefully) going to go next. Don't write off *Wolfenstein* as a remake. It's the same name, and the same war-time setting, but we've seen it playing and it looks better than anything we've seen before.

PAY-PER-PLAY #1

Looking through issue 101, I read in your new Online supplement, and in the editor's opening letter in the magazine, about the troubles faced by online gaming with a number of high-profile sites going out of business. The solution you put forward for the future of online gaming is for players to have to pay to play. I'm writing to say that this is a bad idea.

I was talking with my friends about it and the main reason is that most of us simply can't afford it. A lot of game players are young and,



Good old *Starquake*. They don't make 'em like this anymore.

What can I say other than I feel deeply saddened that the 'real' companies aren't taking this whole e-commerce, and everything related to it, seriously anymore. Just because there were a few unexpected failures doesn't mean that they should give up on e-commerce completely. Amazon – although still not making a profit – had a well worked-out financial plan, allowing for the losses they are incurring at the moment.

So why is everyone giving up on the Internet? Surely they didn't all just hop on the bandwagon and hope to make a quick profit? Surely some of them had some sort of long-term initiatives? I know there are a lot out there who are making it OK, but still, this is a shame. Now we actually have to pay, it's absurd. Shouldn't some things still be free?

JakobG

★ No one likes paying for things they've become accustomed to getting free, but you've got to look at the bigger picture. If you buy a single-player game, you're not using anyone else's equipment. Play over the

Internet and you're effectively getting the chance to play with others over dedicated servers. These have to be paid for somehow, and it's obvious that companies can't survive on advertising alone. Something's got to give, and unfortunately it's going to be your wallet.

WAZZUP?

You know Dear Wendy? The section in your very own magazine where you can write in and get your techy problems solved? One small question: why does it still say 'Dear Wazza' in the little column to the left (the one telling you the email subject)? Eh?

Griffmunk

★ It doesn't (cough).

SEAMAN

Being an extremely committed gooner, I've noticed that Martin Korda is a dead-ringer for our goalie. Don't you reckon?

Tim Patrick

★ Uncanny (see below). Does anyone else think that Korda looks like someone famous. Drop us a line...

RETRO HEAVEN

While I know that Retro Zone has been running for a while, I thought I would spin you a line to let you know I really enjoy reading it, and never more so than last month...

Why, you ask? Simple – *STARQUAKE*! I have spent many sleepless nights trying to remember the name of the game that dominated my youth and had my entire family crammed round my green screen Amstrad monitor. Picture a family in chaos, fighting over the single Amstrad joystick, with the end result of us kids being sent to their respective rooms so my old man could get a game in.

You sent me into a downloading frenzy to try and find a copy of the Amstrad version of the game and I'm glad you did. I recently opened up my own classic gaming and emulation site (<http://freespace.morat.net/bttos>) and was in the process of thinking up what classic title I would review next. I now know which game that it will be.

Anyway, I'll just say thank-you again for the retro section of the mag, as it's always good to find fellow retro gamers and even better to find those classic games you were too young to remember the name of. I do have one suggestion, though. How about putting a few links in to some sites and maybe make some quick ratings on the best/most popular emulators for the platform of the main game reviewed? I'm an avid classic gamer and I know how difficult it can be to get into the scene and find the right



In the future we'll probably have to pay to play *Quake III* over the Internet.

information (hence why I intend to make a review and guide on every system/emulator we use to review a game and include links to where to get them). Keep up the good work.

Simon Farmer

★ We're planning a big feature on the emulator scene soon, so stay posted.

FIVE STAR

Hi there. I am known in the gaming world as MaRRa-Kai. I am a dedicated subscriber to *PC ZONE* and I rarely disagree with your decisions and marking schemes. However, I feel you have made a grave mistake in the Online section of your magazine. How on earth could you have even considered the idea of marking your online games out of five, let alone actually publishing it? It is the kind of crappy marking scheme a low-class PlayStation magazine would mark with. You're leaving a whole 20 per cent between each 'star',

which results in completely inaccurate and misleading results for the reader. Online gaming, as you know, is a big factor in the gaming industry, and it deserves the same care and attention that the rest of the magazine gets. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love the mag as a whole, but this one mistake gives out the wrong signals. Thanks for your time

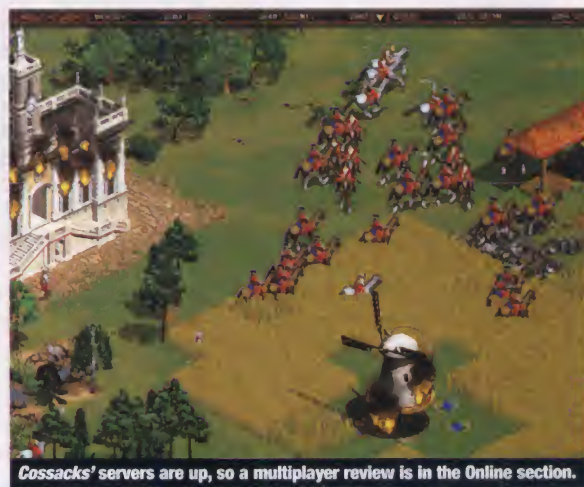
MaRRa-Kai

★ We quite often review games before the scheduled release date, which means that dedicated servers aren't up and running. Rather than fudge the multiplayer issue like other mags (how do they know online play is good without trying it out?) we give a game a couple of months to get going and then revisit it in the Online supplement, awarding it a completely different multiplayer-only score. To avoid confusion with the single-player score, we decided to mark out of five. We like it. [KZ]



Martin Korda.

David Seaman.



Cossacks' servers are up, so a multiplayer review is in the Online section.

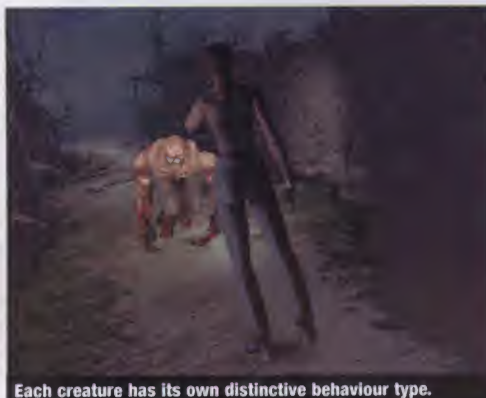
Someone turn on the lights, please

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

Mark Hill plunges into the darkness with a Beta version of the latest Edward Carnby mystery



The first monsters are disposed of very easily.



Each creature has its own distinctive behaviour type.



Sadly, we didn't notice any Ghostbusters antics in the library.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Darkworks
PUBLISHER Infogrames
WEBSITE www.aloneinthedark.com
OUT June 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ The return of a PC gaming legend
- ★ A new episode in digital horror
- ★ Finely crafted graphics and gameplay
- ★ Serious challenger to the *Resident Evil 2* crown

CV DARKWORKS

DARKWORKS

Since it was only founded in 1998, and the team has been working solidly on the new *Alone In The Dark* game, you can't expect a very long list. Darkworks does have its own pre-history, though, since it was born out of the merging of two other French developers, Delphine and Adeline Software, which produced classics such as *Little Big Adventure* and *Fade To Black*.

2001 *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare*. You've probably already heard about this one, so we won't tell you about it again.

Anyone who isn't occasionally afraid of the dark isn't tough, they just lack imagination. I'll confess to hearing strange noises in the house late at night, seeing movements in the deepest shadows of the bedroom and actually feeling an evil presence lurking under the bed before leaping for the light-switch like a little girl.

The unnatural silence of the night breeds hundreds of creaks and groans that can just as easily belong to undead butchers with maggot-ridden faces, brain-chomping zombies and other ghouls as they can to wooden furniture expanding and the engines of fridges starting up. They're more likely to be the former if you've just stayed up late watching *The House By The Cemetery* and *Re-Animator*, or playing *System Shock 2* or *Undying*. And it's likely you'll need a night lamp after playing *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare*.

True to its name, the game plays with light and its absence to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. Not that darkness is the only way to scare people. *Aliens Vs Predator* might have over-relied on it together with shock tactics (although it must be said to great effectiveness) and *Nocturne* might have laid a thick blanket of dusk before sending forth its

demons and werewolves, but computer games can also make your skin crawl without having to turn the brightness on your monitor all the way down. *Resident Evil 2*, *System Shock 2* and *Undying* are all disturbing in their own particular ways without depriving you of perfectly lit rooms, and *The New Nightmare* has learned a few lessons from them too. As I discovered within minutes of loading up a highly polished Beta version of the game.

“Something very eerie is going on, involving genetic-manipulation experiments that have bred all sorts of demonic creatures”

THE DARK IS OUT THERE

If you don't know the history behind one of the most venerable and influential series in computer games, head over to the History Of Darkness panel and get yourself acquainted with the adventures of Edward Carnby. Darkworks, the developer of *The New Nightmare*, may be a relative newcomer to the scene, but it's quite clear that it has a strong sense of the importance of this title and has put every effort into making it something special (as the reported 1,300-plus pre-rendered backgrounds and the high number of cut-scenes will attest).

The team has also brought the series bang up to date, with a touch of the *X-Files* creeping into the *Island Of Dr Moreau* plot. The story begins when Carnby, a grungier version of Fox Mulder, finds out that his best-friend Charles Fiske has died in mysterious circumstances on Shadow Island, which lies off the coast of Maine – this area also happens to be the state where almost all of Stephen King's tales are set and consequently is

absolutely overloaded with creepy phenomena and weird goings-on.

Fiske was a member of bureau 713, a government organisation

that deals with investigations into paranormal activities, and had been on the island searching for three ancient tablets. As you soon discover on arriving there, something very eerie is going on, mostly involving genetic-manipulation experiments that have bred all sorts of demonic creatures. The game itself begins just outside the grounds of a huge mansion, where the first part of your adventure takes place, and it plays heavily on the haunted-house formula that worked so well recently for Clive Barker's *Undying*.

In true *Resident Evil* fashion you can choose to play as a female character as

UPDATE



Our blue-eyed melancholic hero in all his leather-jacketed glory.



"Hey, is there something out there?"



Aline starts out with no weapons at all, suggesting a more thoughtful approach to the game.



There are loads of hidden passages in this house.



Ahh, the rocket launcher. Powerful. Very powerful.

well. In this case, it's Aline Cedrac, a suitably busy archaeologist and adventuress – nothing like a certain Ms Croft then – with her own reasons for finding the ancient tablets.

After parachuting onto the island, each character realistically lands in a different area from the other, guaranteeing that playing as each one will be a different experience, instantly doubling the hours of gameplay. It's always nice to be given a choice. Whoever you play as you can keep close radio contact with the other, exchanging Mulder and Scully-style banter, and occasionally bumping into each other before deciding to head off in different directions to explore the island.

GRIM SHOCK MONKEY

Exploring is really what the game is all about. The mechanics are closer to an adventure game than many other supposed action/adventures and involve you investigating most of the mansion and its surroundings in

“Are you brave enough to turn the torch on and see what's hiding in the room? And is it worth the risk?”

search of clues and objects that let you get from one point to another. None of the puzzles are too taxing, and the inventory – where you can examine, combine or use items – is very easy to use and works much in the same way as *Escape From Monkey Island* or *Grim Fandango*. Like in *Undying*, you

discover journals, diaries and newspaper cuttings along the way to fill you in on the details of the story. You still get to blast your way through a sizeable number of horrid beings, but *The New Nightmare* allows the tension to build up slowly before sending one

your way. The psychological anxiety works in the same way it did in *System Shock 2*, where expectation is the actual source of the fear rather than the hordes of oncoming zombies from *Resident Evil*, for example.

Combat is deliciously simple and, once again, takes a leaf out of the

Resident Evil/Nocturne school. You press one button to unholster your weapon and press the action key to fire. Targeting isn't manual, so most of your shots will find their target without a hitch. Although you start out with a trusty revolver, later weapons include laser rifles, grenade and rocket launchers and even a lightning gun. The Darkworks team has clearly been spending many a lunch hour playing *Quake III*.

Sadly, the first enemies you encounter are dogs, the true staple of the cruelty zoo that computer gaming can sometimes be. And the detail that has gone into their deaths is even more sadistic than the regular *Tomb Raider* slaughterhouse. Not only do the dogs



Despite the high detail of the backgrounds, the characters don't feel out of place on it.



The turn-of-the-century mansion features as much detail in the décor as the one in *Undying*.

THE TWO FACES OF EDWARD CARNBY

Look younger, be younger with a Carnby makeover.

There is such a thing as updating a hero, but you have to admit that Edward Carnby's transformation is quite remarkable. The paranormal investigator has not only changed his date of birth from sometime in the late 19th century (the first games were set in the 1920s) to 1968, he's also shaved off his ginger moustache, died his hair dark brown and assumed the persona of a dark and moody guitar hero. Personally, we prefer the Dr Watson approach, but try telling that to the console kids of today.



A HISTORY OF DARKNESS

You might think *The New Nightmare* is a *Resident Evil* rip-off, but look closer and you'll see it's the other way round

ALONE IN THE DARK - 1992

The original survival horror action/adventure, the one that started it all. It might look dated now, but at the time the combination of 3D graphics, puzzles and combat (with kicks, swords and guns) was truly revolutionary. And, with its haunted mansion, it was scary too. Sort of. And you could play as a female character as well.

ALONE IN THE DARK 2 - 1994

Somewhat bizarrely, and perhaps in a nod to the *Monkey Island* series, the first sequel had a pirate setting. A bootlegger called One Eyed Jack calls upon Carnby's help after hearing of his supernatural investigating abilities (probably in the *Pirate's Gazette*) to fight 15th century pirate ghosts. No, really, we're being serious.

ALONE IN THE DARK 3 - 1995


After the pirates came the cowboys. Some might say that this scenario went one step too far, and it's hard to argue that this *Scooby Doo* tale of undead gunslingers on the set of a spaghetti western doesn't take some of the original's eerie charm away. Still, at least the fourth instalment is going back to its dark roots with tales of creepy goings-on.



whine with disturbing realism when shot, they can also become injured, whereupon you are regaled with the nauseating sight of the poor animal crawling along the floor, dragging its legs until you put it out of its misery. Darkworks is counting on you all being a bunch of vile and sick bastards, obviously (and if you just thought "Cool!" and gave out a slack-jawed cackle at the above description, you probably are). Maybe there's a level where you can drill holes into the heads of rhesus monkeys just for the hell of it. Thankfully, most of your bullets will be spent on monsters.

FEAR EFFECT?

Every screen is pre-rendered in enormous and gorgeous detail and, while this does produce a noticeable delay between screens, at least you don't have to suffer the horrendous camera angles that *Nocturne* inflicted on us. The torch is still as impressive as the one in that game though, especially when it throws elaborate shadows behind objects and slowly illuminates the rococo decorations of the unlit mansion. It also adds to that Mulder touch as Carnby runs through woods lancing the darkness ahead and being able to spot invaluable clues that would have been hard to find otherwise. Well, the game isn't called *Alone In The Sun Reading A Good Book And Sipping Pina Coladas* is it?

In the end, it all boils down to the darkness that envelops you and entices you on. In the background, there's a whole spectrum of spooky sounds to convince you there's something lurking ahead, from blood-curdling screams to owls hooting. Are you brave enough to turn the torch on and see what's hiding in the next room? And, more importantly, is it worth the risk? We'll let you know next month, when we'll have a world exclusive review and can tell you all about it. 

*Think like a man of action
Act like a man of thought*



**"Like Age of Empires.
With knobs on."**

PCZONE



THREE KINGDOMS

傲世
FATE of the DRAGON
三国



PC CD-ROM

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The Heavy Corvette is the largest of all the ships at your disposal.



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Space is the place...

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Particle Systems

PUBLISHER Infogrames

WEBSITE www.independencewar2.com

OUT May

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ The most stunning visuals so far in a space combat game.
- ★ Between 80 and 120 hours of gameplay
- ★ Superb story line
- ★ Free form universe
- ★ Revolutionary joystick driven ship interface

The whole galaxy has gone to Hell and war is once again looming more ominously than a plumber's arse. *Martin Korda* tries to restore some order

If there's one thing I hate, more than just about anything else in this world, it's a child hero. Some barely-out-of-nappies snotty faced little urchin – somehow saving the universe from an unstoppable evil. It just wouldn't happen. Ever. Not on this planet, nor in some distant solar system, in fact, not anywhere. You can just see it can't

you? Zarg the Merciless, would be ruler of the Galaxy confronted by little Jimmy Bates, a six-year-old Billy Bunter lookalike with a lazy eye and a lisp. What's little Jimmy going to do? Unleash some hidden power to thwart the evil one's plans? Fire his magic laser-firing rattle at Zarg's head perhaps? Or is he going to fall over, look confused (wet his pants) and then start crying?

Come on, be honest, it's going to be the third one isn't it? So imagine my horror when I first sat through the ten-minute introduction to Particle Systems' new space combat sim *Edge Of Chaos*, in which a young boy called Cal (who was obviously going to be the hero of the saga) is shown helping his father mine the face of a meteor with the kind of annoying enthusiasm that only a stupid child or a girlie swat could muster.



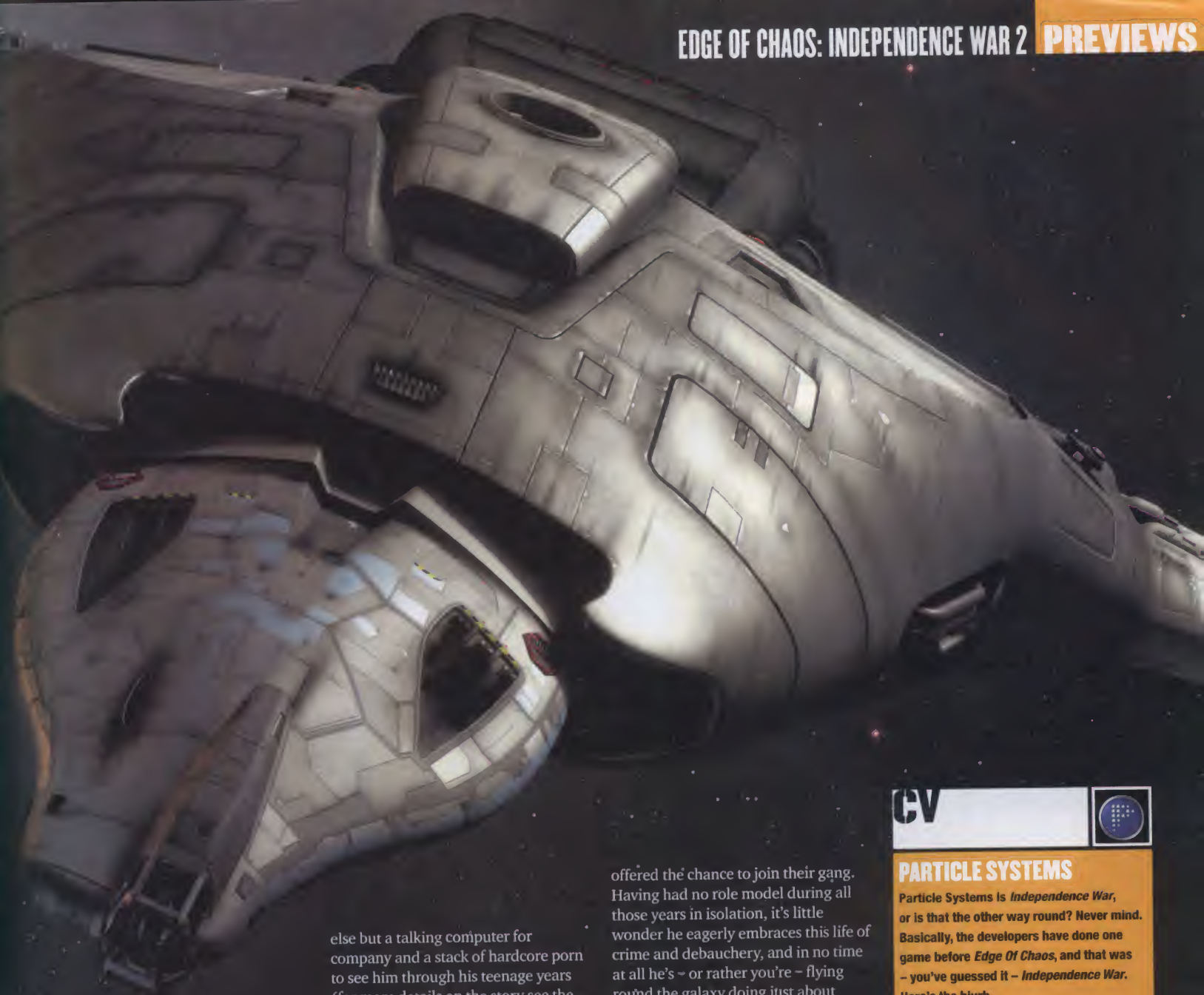
A transport ship, ripe for the picking.



The Tug may look strange, but it'll pack a hell of a punch.



Pigs in space.



HOWEVER...

...my fear was totally misplaced. What was unfolding on screen was one of the best looking FMV sequences yet on the PC. As I watched, I saw the beauty of the graphics, and intently listened to the well-acted dialogue (yes well-acted - amazing I know). I watched the death of Cal's father at the hands of an evil debt collector called Caleb Maas. I pushed back the tears as the orphaned and terrified Cal was captured by Maas and imprisoned for 15 years, with little

else but a talking computer for company and a stack of hardcore porn to see him through his teenage years (for more details on the story see the What's Your Story panel). Suddenly it was all different. This wasn't going to be a space combat game about a little oik saving the universe, this was going to be something completely new, different and enthralling. This was *Edge Of Chaos*.

As you may already have guessed, *Edge Of Chaos* is going to be a space combat sim heavily reliant on a storyline. The game starts for real when Cal is heroically busted out of prison by a group of pirates and

offered the chance to join their gang. Having had no role model during all those years in isolation, it's little wonder he eagerly embraces this life of crime and debauchery, and in no time at all he's - or rather you're - flying round the galaxy doing just about everything and anything it is that pirates do, bar hopping around on one leg saying, "Arrrrgh, me hearties," and smelling of fish.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH YOUR STICK

After the pretty FMVs you'll have to get to grips with flying a space craft, after all, let's not forget that this is the sequel to the excellent *Independence War*, which is still considered a golden oldie by many a space combat sim

CV



PARTICLE SYSTEMS

Particle Systems is *Independence War*, or is that the other way round? Never mind. Basically, the developers have done one game before *Edge Of Chaos*, and that was - you've guessed it - *Independence War*. Here's the blurb...

1997 *Independence War*. This was one of the first space combat games geared towards realism rather than pure arcade dogfighting. Set during the Commonwealth's war against a bunch of unruly rebels, you got to fly massive dreadnoughts instead of small fighters. It was a superbly accurate simulation, and one of the first to use a Newtonian flight model, which has been further improved in the sequel.



Edge Of Chaos' visuals are absolutely incredible.



Expect plenty of combat.



Ahhh, look at the pretty colours.



Don't fire bloody lasers at me.



Control all your ship's systems with just a joystick.



Bandits, 2 o'clock, followed by Neighbours and then Trisha.

enthusiast. As in the prequel, you're going to be facing plenty of enemies intent on blowing you and your friends into the cold dark void. But don't worry. If you're a newbie, there'll be an in-depth tutorial to take you through each aspect of flying your craft, from navigation to dog fighting techniques.

Edge Of Chaos is set to revolutionise the control interface of space combat games forever. Veterans will know exactly what I'm talking about when I say that for the most part, games like this need a great deal more than just a decent joystick to fly your craft with. On top of this, there are usually about 137 different key combinations which control your ship's systems, which

require a brain the size of a bowling ball if you're to remember them all. This won't be the case with *Edge Of Chaos*. Oh no. You'll be able to play the whole game without even touching your keyboard, as all of your ship's systems will be operated via the eight-way hat on your joystick. Pushing it in different directions brings up menus, which allow you to access any part of your ship's onboard computer, be it a space chart to show you the way to the next system, or your vessel's power distribution. Having played the latest beta code, I can tell you now, it takes a little getting used to, but once you've mastered it, you'll never go back to playing with a keyboard again.

During the course of the game, you'll have a chance to get behind the flight stick of five different ships. The first of these is just a simple medium class Command craft. On the two extremes of this scale, you've got the hit and run ships such as the Storm Petrol – a deceptively powerful interceptor craft – and the slow but durable vessels like the Tug and Heavy Corvette, the latter of which will feature heavily towards the end of the game. Having been shown its awesome firepower, it looks like we're going to be in for some explosive battles come the grand finale.

However, if you want to get that far, you'll have to complete the best part of 50 main and 30 sub missions first. Particle Systems claims that it'll take your average Joe 80 hours of gameplay to get that far, while your below average Moe could be looking at anything between 100-120 hours of playing time. One thing that will strike you from the very first second though, is the sheer beauty of the backdrops

to complete tasks for them in return for money and equipment. In this respect *Edge Of Chaos* will be very much like your average RPG, with its central theme and branching optional missions. Thankfully though, there'll be absolutely no risk of stumbling across a pointy beard or goblin called Bert, or even a goblin called Bert with a pointy beard. And that's a promise.

Multiplayer options will include deathmatch, team deathmatch, CTF and bomb tag options, with up to 16 players battling it out over the Net or a LAN. With a Newtonian physics flight model, controlling your ship will be hugely authentic, and larger sized vessels will handle completely differently to the smaller, nipper ones.

SPIT AND DRIBBLE

It's been a long time since we were this excited about a space combat game. In fact, I can't remember us ever being this excited about a space combat game. Usually most people in the PC ZONE office are somewhat

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Not one, not two, but three acts in *Edge Of Chaos'* storyline? Now you're just spoiling us.

While most games follow just one theme throughout, with the odd predictable twist thrown in for good measure, *Edge Of Chaos* is set to feature three distinct acts in its storyline. Each one will have a unique atmosphere and even an exclusive sound track. The story will unfold in the form of lush FMV sequences, and in game cut-scenes. And with an engine as impressive as the Flux, it's going to be hard to tell the two apart. Act one will be set directly after your rescue from Caleb's prison, and will involve much pirating, and gathering of resources. We've been promised that things really hot up in acts two and three, with the final act apparently placing a huge responsibility on your shoulders, and throwing up some incredible plot twists. And let's not forget that there'll be a war for you to fight in as well, it's not called *Independence War 2* for nothing you know. If you want to find out what triggers this conflict, you'll just have to read our review next month.

It's been some time since we've had an excellent storyline in a space combat game, but if Particle Systems is to be believed – they look like an honest enough bunch – then this trend could be about to change. Here's hoping.



Edge Of Chaos' FMVs are nothing short of breathtaking.

One thing that will strike you from the very first second though, is the sheer beauty of the backdrops and the breathtakingly well-rendered spacecraft

and the breathtakingly well-rendered spacecraft, which show off the game's brand new and hugely impressive Flux graphics engine.

NOT JUST A PRETTY STORY LINE

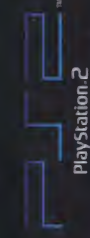
The boys at Particle Systems, nice lads that they are, were keen to point out the game's freeform nature. Although *Edge Of Chaos* will revolve around a central story, the actual universe will be totally freeform. This means that no two missions will ever be the same. Cargo ships will dock with space stations while rival pirate organisations will go about their business. It'll be up to you whether or not to intervene should you stumble upon a defenceless depot that is under attack, or whether to wait for the fireworks to end and scavenge whatever loose cargo is left behind. You'll also be given the choice to play sub missions, in which certain corporations or businesses will ask you

indifferent to the genre, but *Edge Of Chaos* has made us all drool with anticipation. Since the preview code landed on our desks we've literally been skidding on puddles of dribble. We've had gormless looking janitors all over the place, staring blankly into the distance while mopping up the mess. But now they've seen the game and they've started drooling too. Big yellow cones warning passers by of the hazardous surfaces are everywhere, the PC ZONE basement hideout is a giant vat of gob, and the entire floor's circuitry is about to cut out.

Which means I may not have time to tell you that next month we'll be running the world exclusive review of this incredible game, and how you won't find another review of it anywhere on this planet. The level is rising, so all that's left to say before I go, is don't miss it or... (false alarm) you'll regret it. Has anyone got any armbands? [E]

L u i s F i g o


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INFOGRAMES

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Express your talent.

Another month, another preview of...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT


 UPDATE

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bohemia Interactive Studio

PUBLISHER Codemasters

WEBSITE www.flashpoint1985.com

OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ We've been going on about it for months now
- ★ Our already shaky reputation will be in tatters should it prove unplayable
- ★ Not that it will though
- ★ Because so far it looks right smart

Three members of Britain's bestest PC games magazine are battling it out in a multiplayer game of *Operation Flashpoint* – the tactical shoot 'em up set during the Cold War.

Richie: Which way are we going?

Dave: This is crap. I can't get the hang of this at all.

Paul: No it's not. It's brilliant. Quick, get in this jeep and we'll take that village.

Richie: I agree, it's great. But you're going the wrong way.

Dave: Shit, a tank. Great, now I'm dead. Stupid game.

Paul: Give it a chance, you're just being negative for no reason.

Richie: It's great. I think the finished thing will be superb.

Dave: Eh? Why have I turned into a pigeon? Oh this is crap. I'm going to play *Counter-Strike* instead.

Silly music. End credits.

And so it continued in a similar vein for several hours. We took delivery of the preview beta code several weeks ago and to say we were a little bit excited is akin to saying James Brown is a little bit funky. But what's surprising is how people have reacted to actually playing the game. Those of us for whom *Flashpoint* has been some kind of Holy Grail seem to have taken to it with the appropriate levels of reverence. It's looking like it will fulfil our dreams of military simulation perfectly. But others have been put

Back once again to the mid-'80s as *Paul Presley* takes the preview code for a spin

off by the seemingly complex nature of the game. *Counter-Strike* already provides them with realistic-looking military ops, but it plays in a more immediate (and therefore fun) manner. That's the first test that developer Bohemia will have to pass, convincing the Rambo brigade to slow down and think their way through a scenario for a change.

This is not likely to be a pick-up-and-play, instant-gratification kind of a game. It's a tactical simulator. Play it like an arcade game – gung-ho guns-ablaze do-or-die over-the-top Boy's-Own stuff – and you'll spend most of the time looking at the historical quotes that accompany each death scene.

FLASH-WHAT?

I'm not going to waste time going over the background once again, bar the following condensed version for you Johnny-come-latelies. Cold War... infantry simulation... NATO vs Russia... real army tactics... multi-role... vehicles, tanks and helicopters... advanced AI and tactical engine... multiplayer... made in Czech Republic.

“By far the biggest test is the AI engine and from what we're seeing here it's very impressive indeed”

If you want more details go and order issue #98 from our subscription department and make our overpaid bosses even richer than they are now.

By far the biggest test is the AI engine and from what we're seeing here, it's very impressive indeed. Soldiers seem to run around, taking cover and hitting the deck when the shooting starts, following orders (and, impressively, giving them out in the middle of ever-changing tactical situations). Significantly better than the AI seen in the multiplayer co-op modes anyway, but that's more down to our lack of tactical nous than any

problems with the game. If Bohemia can get the promised voice-over Net software working properly, and you can find players who are willing to take orders rather than the anarchistic, good for nothings that litter the *ZONE* office, then this could be a big hit online.

TEST DRIVE

Other *Flashpoint* promises are also looking good. The multi-vehicle aspect seems to work well, with tanks proving an especially good laugh in multiplayer mode. The great thing is vehicles aren't just thrown in willy-nilly. In the early campaign missions, as you are still working your way through the ranks, you'll do little more than ride in the back of trucks or transport choppers. As you progress, you'll find yourself taking jeeps for a spin or stealing civilian cars to get out from behind enemy lines. Then there are the combat helicopters that you train up and eventually pilot. But it never feels gratuitous. You never think, 'this is just a jeep mission', 'this is just a tank mission...'

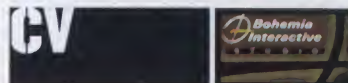
All of which is testament to how adaptable the mission editor that

comes packed with the game is (see side panel) and how well Bohemia seem to be using it. Missions feel suitably grand in scale. The confusion of war is impressively realised, something of an all-important first for a game of this type.

BUGWATCH

Having said all that, let us inject a note of caution if we may. Impressive as the concept, thought, AI engine and technical content is, it's crucial that Bohemia polish the title immensely before they release it. Granted, all we've seen is early preview code, but

given just how good *Flashpoint* has the potential to be, it would be a crime against life itself if the imminent release schedule forces the Czech group to cut corners now. We're not talking about fancy front ends or FMV sequences here. What we mean is how the game hangs together. Making the gameplay run in a fluid, enjoyable nature. Our advice, assuming Bohemia are paying any attention to us, is to let its publishers, Codemasters, take a hands-on role in the final stages, relying on its already proven talent in this field to give us the game *Flashpoint* deserves to be. If we have another *Hidden & Dangerous*, potential-over-implementation deal here, then there really is no justice in the world. 



Bohemia Interactive Studio

Czech these guys out... (You did that joke last time – Ed)

1999 Already in development for a couple of years, Interactive Magic's PR bloke visits us with a copy of *Poseidon*, soon to be known as *Flashpoint 1985: Status Quo*. I-Magic then dies and Ubi Soft picks up the pieces.

2000 Ubi Soft drops *Flashpoint* from its schedule (not cutesy enough), leaving the game without a publisher once again.

2000 Codemasters sign *Flashpoint*, dropping the 'Status Quo' references and after meeting Bohemia's Marek Spanel, we're told it was the *PC ZONE* preview in June that alerted Codemasters to the game.

2001 *Operation Flashpoint* gets ever closer to completion as we're bombarded with preview code on a weekly basis.

2002 *Flashpoint* sells more than 12 million copies worldwide and in a gesture of thanks, Codemasters give *PC ZONE* £300,000 to spend on themselves...



That'll wake 'em up.



Don't worry, it's easier to fly than it looks.



That's me that is. No really, I mean it.



It's worth a shot, surely.



It's multi-role heaven.

WALKTHROUGH

ON A MISSION

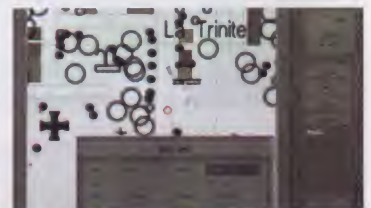
The mission editor is a powerful tool that takes some getting used to. Since it's the same one Bohemia is using to create the game, that's understandable. Here's a taster...



1 Today's mission involves taking out an enemy officer in this nearby town.



2 We'll start you off with a sniper rifle on your back and a song in your heart.



3 It's a trek to the town, so we'll put a few civilian cars for you to nick here.



4 A preview shows civilians seem reluctant to leave their cars for you to steal.



5 The enemy officer doesn't stay put either, which makes finding him hard.



6 Sod it, we'll put you in a tank and let you shoot the crap out of things instead.

GANGSTERS 2: VENDETTA



THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Hothouse Creations
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
WEBSITE www.gangsters2.com
OUT Now

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Interface has been given an overhaul
- ★ Less confusing
- ★ Focused storyline
- ★ Fuggedaboutit!

Management games. The PC's drowning in them like a gangster in concrete slip-ons. And it would be safe to say that they all come down to a basic template of effectively controlling resources to increase your power. Therefore we have to look at all the other factors that govern what makes a good game, and one that immediately jumps out is setting. With its 1930s mob theme, the original *Gangsters* should have been a

“Joey returns to find his father on the wrong side of the mob with his brains on the wrong side of his face”

great concept to work such a template around. Of course, that's “should” because, despite its setting, it was let down by an extremely shoddy interface and a tendency to overwhelm those not of a hardcore strategic disposition (receiving a poorly 58 per cent back in *PCZ* #71). What's the good news, then? Well, Hothouse Creations, didn't seem too happy with the game either, as they've gone and draped a shiny new coat over the

James Lyon does a great impression of Al Capone. “Say ‘ello to my liddle freynd.” Sigh...

sequel. One that'll hopefully cover the mess that was the first game.

G FOR VENDETTA

The less than intuitive interface has been redesigned in order to make it more user-friendly than its predecessor. Orders are now context-sensitive: with areas of the world dictating the kind of instructions you can carry out when clicking on them. The same strategies as before will be employed, however, instead of the original's turn-based play, your commands are issued in real-time. Profiting from the likes of protection rackets, prostitution, or gambling while keeping your hands clean with respectable fronts and skilled accountants should become easier, thus allowing the true strategy to shine through.

Objectives are completed by recruiting lieutenants and assigning

numerous tasks to each of your operatives. Subsequently, each lieutenant can recruit four henchmen to help out and protect him while specific missions will require the skills of individual specialists – like safe-crackers – to help you accomplish your goals. After successful completion of each mission, your employees are given experience points and characters are carried over from previous missions. You have a lot to lose if your characters



Traffic and citizens help bring the city alive.

get killed, so it'll take a lot of planning to get them through in one piece.

All this is wrapped up in a story in which your character, Joey Bane, returns from overseas to find his father on the wrong side of the mob with his brains on the wrong side of his face. For Joey that's the perfect excuse to declare war on the mob element and take over the entire state using any method he can think of. Plot aside, what this means in practice is instead of randomly generated maps, the levels are purposefully designed to incorporate a set campaign – around 25 missions set over 15 different cities.

MARRIED TO THE MOB

What's more, the addition of day and night cycles should lead to more strategic manipulation of the

environment. Certain tasks are going to be easier to accomplish under the cover of darkness, while your more respectable business fronts should operate at a premium during working hours.

An additional deathmatch mode is based around a number of styles, with 12 specially constructed multiplayer maps to battle on. There won't be a map editor packaged with the game, and the developers are undecided as to whether to include one at a later date. It probably all depends on how well the game sells. When we've had a chance to settle down with the finished game we'll find out if it's any cop or whether we'll have to break out the baseball bats. Let's hope it's more *Goodfellas* than *Godfather 3* otherwise you can just fuggedaboutit. **[W]**



An impromptu bonfire, gangster style.



Gangsters mostly hang out in warehouses at night.



Up to eight henchmen can be controlled at any time.



Go on, you know there are millions of questions you wanna ask.

Feel the fear as the Borg chase you in Assimilation Deathmatch.

Graphics card glitch? Nah, just an old TV show that Paris loves to take to the Holodeck with him.

Look, you actually get to play with the transporter as part of your mission.

Top laugh – watch all hell break loose when you hit the ship's self destruct mechanism.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE – MISSION PACK

To boldly go where no cliché has gone before – Les Ellis sets phasers to fun

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Raven
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE <http://www.ravensoft.com/eliteforce>
OUT May

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ Virtual Voyager tour of the ship
- ★ More one player missions
- ★ More multiplayer action
- ★ New maps
- ★ New holodeck action

As juicy as *Quake III* meets *Star Trek* sounded in the run up to the release of *Voyager Elite Force* – it never quite managed to live up to its name. As good as it was, hardcore gamers found it woefully short, while diehard Trekkers, who couldn't care less, found themselves in a state of euphoria over the accuracy to their favourite TV show. So it wasn't *Half-Life*, but it sold – hence the now inevitable mission pack.

If the original game made Trekkers feel good about themselves, it'll take them weeks to return to earth after they get their heads around what's on offer in the mission pack. For a start, there's the chance to explore all the decks of Voyager while carrying out mini-missions as a full crew member. You'll need to poke your nose into all corners of the ship and talk to everyone you meet as you do your day-to-day jobs. And as if acting like you actually live on the Voyager isn't enough – there

new maps and character models, both of which are incorporated into the additional multiplayer experience. On top of that there are new types of deathmatch for the new maps.

ASSIMILATE

Pick of the bunch is the Borg assimilation, where a Borg chases a group of federation guys, assimilating whoever he catches, pretty soon it's two against the Feds, then three and so on. Imagine an interstellar British

there's a real treat for diehard fans. Remember how Paris loves to watch the adventures of *Captain Proton*? Well you can play one of these adventures, and it's all done in black and white, just like the TV show. It's attention to detail like this that makes *Elite Force* stand out above the plethora of, to be honest, disappointing *Trek* games.

MORE OF THE SAME

But we're more concerned on exactly how much appeal this may hold for the non-diehard Trekkers who bought *Elite Force* and finished it in two days – will they want more of the same? Possibly not. This add-on runs the risk of pushing *Elite Force* even further into the reaches of diehard fans-only land – and away from the mass market appeal of most first-person shooter fans. They got lucky with *Elite Force* in that it offered something for both sets of fans – but they may not get so lucky twice. **EW**

“Trekkers get the chance to explore all the decks of Voyager while doing missions as a full crew member”

are a whole bunch of hidden items to find that unlock extra features.

There are other additions to the single-player game came in the form of extra missions where you have to rescue a woman from the clutches of an evil Doctor – sounds more *Flash Gordon* than *Star Trek* – but it does introduce

Bulldog and you get the idea. Action Hero, Player Class, Last Man Standing and Disintegration round off the multiplayer additions – all of which should be enough to keep you happy if you play online.

Wander on up to the Holodeck, I'm sure you know where that is, and

Round about the cauldron go

MAGIC & MAYHEM: ART OF MAGIC



Take an established and proven game formula involving magic and strategy, give it some lush 3D graphics and pass it over to *Chris Anderson* to do the playtesting. The job's a good 'un.



You can summon monsters as well as cast creature spells. Here are some eagles.



Ah child, my name is Milesius, and all will be revealed in good time

It's a baddie, pretending to be a goodie.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Charybdis
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive
WEBSITE www.magicandmayhem.co.uk
OUT June

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ It looks great – that's official
- ★ Impressive AI
- ★ Retains the charm of the original game
- ★ Multiplayer Battle Mode

There's nothing worse than building up your hopes for a big title only to find that it disappoints when it finally arrives. Yes, the screenshots in last month's preview looked great, and yes, we were secretly confident that developer Charybdis could deliver the goods when it finally finished work on *Art Of Magic*. But without having played the thing, we were always prepared for the

possibility that it might not be quite what we were expecting when it finally arrives for review.

Fortunately, we won't have to wait for next month's review for confirmation of our faith in this title. We've had an early look at the software and although it's not finished yet, it's looking very nice indeed.

The new 3D engine breathes new life into what is essentially a very

offering considerable assistance to the player during the missions. This is particularly good news since, on the evidence of the first few levels we played, you're going to need all the help you can get. Enemy magicians are a lot smarter in the sequel than they were in the first game. They guard key positions of power (magic circles that give mana to the player or computer NPC who controls them) and will

characters who assist you in certain missions. They make new creatures and send them off to take over positions of power, leaving you free to explore the landscape and take out enemy beasts as you go along. They also seem to defend themselves well when you're not around, and they don't walk headfirst into the biggest trouble they can find (unlike the characters in the first game) which is, of course, nice.

“Launch into a level, make a few creatures, send them off exploring and pounce on any position of power”

similar title to its predecessor, but as we already know, that's no bad thing. Right from the outset it's obvious the new engine is designed to iron out the problems that made the first title frustrating. Characters no longer get stuck in stupid places, and characters that were previously introduced at key points only to help the story along now play an active part in the proceedings,

defend them to the last. My key tactic of waiting for them to walk away from their one remaining position of power so I could blast their minions and control all the mana in the game no longer works. They will defend key positions until they are sure they have adequate defences before moving on. It's almost like playing a human opponent. Equally impressive are the

THE SAME, BUT SOMEHOW DIFFERENT

Gameplay is pretty much the same deal as it was in the first game: launch into a level, make a few creatures, send them off exploring the map, pounce on any position of power you find and hope your enemy hasn't been quicker about it than you. From there on in it's a simple matter of rooting out your enemy and building up your forces before attacking, although it has to be said the introduction of computer characters on your side means you'll

have to change your strategy considerably from the first game and consider their resources in addition to your own. In this respect, it's more of a real-time strategy game than an RPG. There's the same sense of urgency you get when you play an RTS in that you know you have to get your act together quickly before your opponent has a chance to do the same. In fact, apart from the ability to distribute a few skill points in between missions based on the experience you've earned in-game, it doesn't feel much like an RPG at all. Think of it as a fantasy-based action game (not entirely dissimilar to *Warcraft*) and you'll get the idea. This is what gives *AOM* so much potential as a multiplayer title, with fast-paced action and quick-thinking playing a much bigger part in the proceedings than collecting and distributing



You won't get far without some of these. They're called spells.

BETTER IN BATTLE?

Fancy kicking seven shades out of your mates? Then do so with the Battle Mode

Charybdis is claiming that while the single-player mode is strong, it's in multiplayer (Battle Mode) that *Art Of Magic* will really come into its own. We haven't seen this in action yet (we hope to be able to test it at review stage), but we can tell you that multiplayer in the original game was highly entertaining and given all the improvements for the sequel there's no reason to believe things will be any different this time around.



When your health gets low, you're in trouble, just like now.



Discussing politics with a friendly skeleton. Not.

hundreds of stats. Despite the obvious similarities to certain titles though, *AOM* retains a charm all of its own and takes a unique approach to the everyday business of amassing an army and unleashing it on the opposition. It's perhaps more satisfying than a standard RTS since you're taking direct control of a smaller number of units and guiding them directly to their destinations. The original feel of the first title is also present in this sequel.

CHARYBDIS PRESENTS

The main difference between *AOM* and its predecessor (apart from the absence of time-consuming puzzles) is its presentation. Rich and detailed environments are the norm, character models are impressive, and spell effects are suitably over the top and graphically pleasing. The game engine is used to power the cut-scenes which develop the story, and important characters in the game will pop up



Wolves use a lot of mana and aren't much cop, but they look good.

at crucial moments to tell you things of earth-shattering importance. It's all pleasantly unobtrusive and it manages to blend nicely with the hectic action, rather than intruding upon it, though it has to be said we were not completely convinced by some of the voice-overs, which sounded decidedly dodgy in places. On this evidence then, *AOM* is certainly out to improve on all the elements in the first title, as opposed to changing them drastically in any way.

This is bound to prove popular with fans of the first game, and newcomers to the series are likely to find it a refreshing change from the run-of-the-mill RTS titles flooding the PC games market. While we don't want to be seen jumping the gun at this point (we've only played the first four or five levels) we can say there's every reason to be optimistic about *Art Of Magic*'s chances of living up to its hefty expectations when it comes in for review next month, when all will be revealed. **PC**

PC ZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the **ZONE** reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've just got to buy and which to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason, **PC ZONE** works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

★ Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive gamers and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.

★ What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.

★ Occasionally, this means we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that "multiplayer works well", we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.

★ We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest 1GHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.

★ Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the pre-requisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85

(and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has to be pretty special to get the award.

★ We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.

★ Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in **PC ZONE**, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.



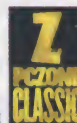
WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 • **Zabrac** 01626 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game scores 90 or above, it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.



80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.



70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell – in fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a title scoring in the 20s is probably pretty poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

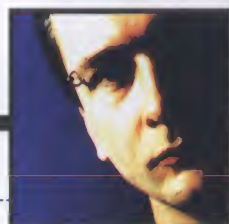
0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pantsness thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.



MEET THE TEAM

All **PC ZONE**'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

FAVOURITE SPICE



DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White*

I wouldn't kick any of them out of bed.



RICHEL SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Chortlon & The Wheelies* on DVD

My homemade garam masala is legendary.



MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS
CURRENTLY PLAYING Games in my undercrackers

It sounds like melange.



MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Hostile Waters*

Chilli, but only for the first burn it gives you, not the second.

TAKE 2 MUCH

★ **DEPUTY EDITOR** Richie Shoemaker



The old chestnut of us reviewing games before they are finished has been cracked open once more with news that *Z: Steel Soldiers* has been delayed again. The strategy classic, reviewed two issues ago, still hasn't arrived in the shops and though I knew why some time ago, I was sworn to secrecy. Thing is, with accusations flying, I can hold my tongue no longer. The reason: publisher Eon decided to hold back the game was because it was worried it would lose out on a few sales had it arrived too near the release of *Black & White*. So now you know.

And it isn't just the release dates that get changed. Last month we reviewed Take 2's *Duke Nukem-stopgap Serious Sam*, giving it 81 per cent. Over in just a few hours play and hardly the most original of games, it was fun, and for £19.99, good value.

But after reading the reviews as they filtered in, finding that in one gaming magazine the game received 92 per cent (as good as *Half-Life*? – we think not), publishers Take 2 decided if they put the price of the game up, with thousands of gamers now chomping at the bit after the 'rave' reviews, they could make a killing.

So after months of being told *Serious Sam* would be released as a mid-price game – all the way until a week from release – we now find it costs £30.

Being a good (rather than exceptional) journalist I phoned Take 2 to ask them why *Serious Sam* costs 30 per cent more than we were assured it would

and twice the price it costs in the US – \$20 (roughly £14). I expected something along the lines of: "At the time of going to press, the information you were given was correct". Instead I was told by my contact at the company that Take 2 had not officially commented on the price rise. Handy. The suggestion from Take 2: "We advise customers to buy the game online." From the US, for \$20? Yes. Er, why not put the price back down and save customers the hassle?

All this may sound like sour grapes, and to a certain extent it is. But if Take 2 gets away with it, other publishers may want to try it as well ("Ooh look, *Black & White* got 95. Let's put another tenner on."). Of course, if they do that, they should give all their crap games away free – which will never happen as people haven't got the space.

So what's the solution? Well in the case of *Serious Sam* we recommended the game on the basis that it was available for £20. That's still the case. What I find particularly galling is the price difference between US and UK versions of the game, both of which are identical, save for the fact that the US game comes in a box the size of a house – surely some justification that if anything the UK game should be cheaper.

So, just to make me look stupid for having a go, I bet that after reading this Take 2 put the price back down to £20 – hope they do. For one thing it will make me feel that someone actually reads this, and for another, justice will be done.

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out eight Classics.

This doesn't mean that all games scoring less should be ignored. Rather, the Classic tag points to



the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future.

And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that

received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each genre.

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100 **BUDGET**

No cash? Not to worry, here are some cheap games.

102 **FEEDBACK**

Come on, get it all off your chest.



CHRIS ANDERSON

GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Anarchy Online* and *Undying*

Is tobacco a spice?



STEVE HILL

GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING Lots of first-person shooters

Ginger, because she looks dirty



PAUL PRESLEY

GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Happy families*

What do you think?



KEITH PULLIN

GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White* and *PGA 2000*

Root ginger – it's good for the heart and has other medicinal qualities.



PHIL WAND

GENRE FPS, driving, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Fantavision* on the PlayStation 2 and *Tribes 2*

Nutmeg. Never had banana nutmeg muffins?



RHIANNA PRATCHETT

GENRE RPG, RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Cossacks* and *Black & White*

Nutmeg, it does strange things to me.

REVIEWS EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE

EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE

★ £34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out July





Just like fireworks night...



Another Harkonnen stronghold succumbs to the mighty walking polygons.



If you hold the mouse over turrets you can see their range.



A close-up example of the textures. As you can see they're not good.



A whirlwind sucks the life out of the Atreides.

Keith Pullin tries his hand at the latest *Dune* game and finds himself opening a can of worms. And bloody big ones at that

In 1993 the iconoclastic Westwood Studios released *Dune 2*. It had an instant and profound effect on the game-playing public. Almost overnight, healthy, young men became edgy, nervous hermits surviving on nothing but a torrid diet of harvesting, refining and constructing. This phenomenon later became known as the 'RTS', and from its loins leapt the illustrious likes of *Command & Conquer*, *Red Alert*, *Tiberian Sun* and *Red Alert 2*.

Ferrari, McLaren and Williams mechanics would be leaning over the pit wall pointing and pissing themselves with laughter.

For a more relevant comparison, let's just say that there isn't a single leading RTS game on the market that need worry about the graphical capabilities of *Emperor*. There is no option to zoom right down into the action like in *Ground Control*; there is no real-time day/night cycle like in *The Moon Project*; and the textures on everything from the landscapes to the units

“The much-vaunted 3D engine needs some work. No, let's rephrase that – it needs to be stripped down and totally rebuilt”

Another less impressive offering from the same developer was *Dune 2000*. This piss-poor remake of *Dune 2* made no new friends, indeed some old friends claimed it was identical to *Dune 2* but with updated graphics. Well, the truth must have hurt because with *Emperor: Battle For Dune*, Westwood has tried yet again to bring the game that started it all bang up to date.

SCARY SPICE

We emphasise the word 'tried' because sadly it appears that Westwood Studios has again missed its mark. Why? Well, to put it kindly, the much-vaunted 3D engine needs some work. No, let's rephrase that – it needs to be stripped down and totally rebuilt. If this engine was inside a brand new Formula One racing car, the

are very garish indeed. In fact the last time we saw colours clash this bad was on *Pyjamarama* for the Spectrum 48K.

And it's not just the textures that are dire. Most units and buildings are made up from extremely basic polygons giving the game a pronounced blocky look. With this in mind it actually makes sense that you can't zoom in too close, because if you did you'd recoil in horror at the mess before you.

Aesthetically, the only part of the game that's remarkable is the musical score and sound effects. In fact, if this review was based on those two elements alone *Emperor* would receive in the region of 100 per cent. Pity then that this magazine is not the *NME* and our reviews are based upon a game's ability to entertain.

LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

Traditionally this is where Westwood has always excelled. But again, on this occasion there appears to be little imagination on the developer's part. The game experience itself is virtually identical to every other RTS game Westwood has released over the last decade or so, though notably it lacks the satirical humour so prevalent in *Red Alert 2*.

Firstly we get to choose from three different sides. OK, so it's always nice to have a choice and we're very grateful for it, but after extensive play you realise that apart from the poorly acted FMV sequences and the way the story unfolds, there's really no significant difference between the protagonists. It doesn't matter whether you play as House Atreides, Harkonnen or Ordos – it's the same three-point plan to success. The same old strategies are present in so far as you get your main base up and running, start collecting your resources, and then you produce units. It's like listening to a CD on repeat for eight years...

Exactly how long can this go on for? Precisely how many more times will Westwood remix the same game and callously flog it for 30 quid? Come on guys... Innovate! You've done it before and you can do it again, and as the saying goes: "Nothing is more dangerous than an idea, when you have only one idea."

But the really disappointing part of all of this is that no matter how uninspiring this game is, people will still go out and buy it. Brand loyalty counts for a lot, and we have absolutely no doubt that *Emperor* will go straight to number one. A lot of gamers simply don't have the time or



Some Atrideid soldiers celebrate victory in a minor skirmish.



Troops can be moved around the map *Shogun*-style.



The more kills a unit makes, the better its rank becomes.

patience to try anything else – they just stick to what they know. It's like when every single Metallica fan in the country pre-orders a new single and suddenly there's a guy on *Top Of The Pops* growling about nuclear holocausts and anthrax. There really is no accounting for taste.

THE BEST LAID PLANS

You may have gathered that we're not too happy, and you'd be right. We've come to expect more from Westwood and the sad truth is that this game is not a classic. There are, however, certain areas that are worthy of praise.

The tactical overview map of Arrakis is an excellent idea and gives the player the chance to shift troops around the surface of the planet before selecting which sector to attack next. Players are

also given data such as the intelligence of enemy AI as well as the amount of enemy and allied reinforcements available in each sector. It's a minor gimmick, but it's surprising how much this information affects your all-conquering plan.

Those with an adventurous disposition will also be pleased to learn that the action is not just confined to the vast deserts of Arrakis. There are numerous missions based on other planets in the universe that thankfully add much-needed graphical and strategic variety to the game.

Due to the lack of spice (or Melange to the cultists) on these other planets, a whole new approach is needed. In order to manufacture units you must ensure that there is a healthy economy back on Arrakis to meet

the demands of your military spending. Providing the economic infrastructure is in place you are given regular shipments of cash to use as you wish. Alternatively you can create units and buildings in giant spaceports and have them delivered to the planet's

and rescue some hijacked frigates. These missions come across as welcome respite where it's stealth and dirty tactics all the way. All of a sudden the gameplay is transformed into something much more joyous.

“Huge worms and lethal sandstorms suck your men into oblivion. In fact, there's more sucking than in a Thai massage parlour”

surface. The only catch here is that you have to build the spaceport first.

There are also other subtler missions along the lines of *Tiberian Sun* and *Red Alert* where there are only one or two units to control. One example is where you have to take a small group of snipers into a space station

Oh, and lest we forget, back on Arrakis there are also bloody huge worms to avoid. Now when we say huge we mean *massive*. In fact these worms are probably one of *Emperor's* most atmospheric and faithful features. In the film you always get the impression that these creatures are the true masters of Arrakis and here it's no

different. If you don't keep your eye on the desert and watch out for the telltale signs, you could find entire armies being swallowed whole. Worms aren't the only nuisances either; lethal sandstorms appear out of nowhere and suck your men into oblivion. In fact, there's more sucking and swallowing in this game than in a Thai massage parlour.

WHO'S IN THE HOUSE?

But there is one particular gameplay aspect in all of this that stands proud and drags the game way above the average, and that is your ability to form treaties and alliances with lesser-known sub-houses of Arrakis. By allying with someone such as the Fremen or the Ix (to name two of the five in total), the player gets to build a camp for that house within their

I'M A PROFESSIONAL ACTOR SIR...

Do you know who I am?

No Westwood title would be complete without the obligatory FMV storyline. Famous faces in need of a quick buck this time include Mike McShane and that guy who plays that Klingon bloke Worf in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The acting is hardly classical, but then for a PC game, it isn't actually all that bad. No, really.



The strain is starting to show...



“How much did you say you'd pay me? I've done Othello, don't you know.”

WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF FUN

Go head-to-head with friends or foes and knock their blocks off

One of the saving graces of *Emperor* is its multiplayer options. We will of course go into this side of the game in more detail in our online section, but for now here's a brief idea of what you can expect. Basically you can choose to play over a LAN or the Internet in a match containing up to eight players. There are approximately 20 different maps to choose from. Players choose to play as one of the three main houses, and then further selections decide who your sub-house and secondary house will be. The resulting assortment of units and tactics that can be used during the game is impressive, and leads to one of the most rounded multiplayer experiences Westwood has ever created. We wouldn't go so far as to say it's as good as *Red Alert 2* simply because the actual units themselves aren't as well done. Still, we guarantee you'll get more value for money out of it than the single-player game.



It's amazing what you can do when you put your mind to it.

base. This allows access to more troops and more military units with new special abilities, as well as occasional reinforcements from that house.

In the single-player campaign this wider variety of units doesn't necessarily change the overall battle strategy that much, but what it does do is offer the player a few more RPG-type choices along the way. In multiplayer skirmish matches however, this option really comes into its own. Imagine, if you will, four players each playing as House Harkonnen. Traditionally you would be safe in the knowledge

that all your opponents have the same weapons and the same abilities as you. In *Emperor* you now get the choice to select the sub-house you are allied with before the start of the game, thus

“We had high hopes for the game, as everyone did, but we can't help but feel a little let down”

adding a new variable to the equation. Theoretically each person on that map could have a different sub-house ally, with nobody knowing who that ally is until the first attack. Ultimately it

adds mystery to the skirmish and thus makes the tactics and the game's outcome far less predictable than usual.

Despite its many shortcomings in other areas,

there's no denying the multiplayer side of *Emperor* is a technical step forward from anything they've done before, and there's no question that it advances the gameplay significantly. If you

want a long-lasting multiplayer game with great options and a plethora of units and tactics, you could do a lot worse. In fact, we recommend it – providing you can forgive the graphical dog's dinner, of course...

MUST TRY HARDER

Earlier we mentioned how other real-time strategy games had nothing to worry about when it came to the graphics engine in *Emperor*. Unfortunately, pretty much the same can be said for the gameplay. On the one hand, it's too simplistic to attract fans of games like *Earth 2150* and *The Moon Project*. Conversely, the tiresome harvesting and refining concept is too fiddly and old-skool for those who've defected over to the more straightforward approach of *Ground Control* and *Steel Soldiers*.

INPERSPECTIVE

We can only really see *Emperor* appealing to those who are ardent Westwood fans. But when it comes to the crunch it's clear to see that Westwood is falling further and further behind its RTS peers.

Red Alert 2

Z: Steel Soldiers

Ground Control

The Moon Project

Emperor: Battle For Dune

There truly is only one type of games player who will appreciate the limited appeal of *Emperor* and that is the devout Westwood groupie. For them *Emperor* contains all the right ingredients: the instantly recognisable resource management interface, the cheesy FMV acting, the ability to play as one of three sides, and the 3D engine fans have been screaming for. Oh yes, if you've survived on the Westwood diet for the last few years, you'll quickly forgive the prototype engine and appreciate *Emperor* for what it really is – more new levels for *Tiberian Sun* and a few more units to boot. Hurrah.

For the rest of us though, it's simply impossible to get overly excited about. We had high hopes for the game, as everyone did, but we can't help feeling a little let down.

We know there will be heated disagreement from many quarters, but if those responsible for *Emperor* are honest with themselves, they must know in their hearts that there is much, much better to come. **PC**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P350
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
650Mb hard disk Space **WE SAY** PIII 600
with 64Mb RAM as well as a good 3D
accelerator card

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Fantastic sound • Good multiplayer • Sub-houses are a nice touch
⬇ **DOWNERS** Horrible-looking 3D engine • Poor detail on units and buildings • Repetitive gameplay regardless of the side you choose • Seems rushed

76 Dune bites the dust – again

A worm. Worms are very dangerous, but tend not to linger in one place. This one should be leaving soon.
None of the enemy survived the encounter with the worm. Commanders: You might learn something from their misfortune.



Not the kind of worm you'd stick on the end of a fishing line. Mind you, imagine the fish you'd catch...

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

I like you. Do you want to be my friend?

Emperor's most innovative feature has to be the ability to form allies with sub-houses on Arrakis. It adds a non-linear feel to the game that could almost be construed as role-playing. Ultimately Westwood would do well to develop this aspect of the gameplay in future products. Imagine the possibilities: you could merge units from opposing sides and create an almost infinite variety of new technology, which could then be used in battle or even traded.



The Fremen show their mastery of ambush tactics.



Ash bears a slight resemblance to Bruce, but the lack of detail is criminal.



Apparently you pay a visit to the medieval world of *Army Of Darkness* in later levels.

EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

★ £29.99 • THQ • Out now

Mark Hill brings you another gem in the series of When Licences Go Wrong

There is a very fine balance between terror and laughter, a balance which few films manage to strike. They can scare you out of your wits in a way that makes you keep your bedside lamp on throughout the night or they can make you go into hysterics so that you chuckle to yourself for days afterwards. But it's a rare film that manages to do both. *Evil Dead* was such a film – the balance shifting largely to the area of comedy for the sequels – and we hold a special place in our memory for its triumph of talent over budget. Watching an uncut version at the tender age of ten might have scarred me for life and given me nightmares well into my late teens, but I still have a *Star Wars*-like veneration for it. Now there's

a computer game based on it. It won't scare you and it won't make you laugh. But its achievement is almost as great, striking as it does a fine balance between despair, disappointment, anger and frustration.

DAWN OF THE DEAD

For all you uncultured philistines out there who don't know the story, it goes like this.

Ash arrives at an old log cabin in the mountains with a group of friends – or just his girlfriend in the sequel's version – to spend a quiet weekend. There they discover the *Necronomicon*, an ancient Sumerian book bound in human skin, also known as the *Book Of The Dead*. They also find

The game is set eight years after the last film, when Ash has settled down with a new girlfriend to a normal life. Soon, though, he is haunted by nightmares of his experiences and returns to the old cabin to put his demons to rest. On arriving, his girlfriend is kidnapped and he is forced to once again kick some demon ass. It's around here that it all goes horribly wrong.

ARMY OF BLANDNESS

The intention is obviously to rip off *Resident Evil* as much as possible, mixing gory action with simple puzzle-solving. And it doesn't work. The graphics are poor, but it's the total lack of atmosphere and the infuriating gameplay that get to you in the end.



The tree looking er... not quite as we remember it.

them consists mainly of waving your axe and your chainsaw in their general direction until they disappear, you soon start biting your lower lip in annoyance. The controls are poor and unintuitive, but here at least the PC has an advantage over the console versions in that you can use your

mouse. It would have worked even better if strafing was of any use, or if Ash actually did what you wanted him to do.

The pitiful camera angles don't help either. The engine seems to have all the disadvantages of the *Nocturne* engine without any of the benefits (such as incredible visuals). You end up dreading the next monster, not because they're scary, but because the combat is so dull and dying is so frustrating. Since you can hardly move to dodge these waves of creatures, the game lazily solves the lack of balance by giving you health at almost every step. And you need it too. You can only save when you find a film reel and are standing near an inventory chest, and this happens all too infrequently.

“You dread the next monster, not because they're scary, but because combat is so dull and dying is so frustrating”

a recording by the previous occupant of the cabin, a professor studying the book, who recites passages and inadvertently releases an evil presence from the woods. People get possessed and turn into a terrifying combination of Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* and George Romero's zombies, while Ash is left to chop everyone to bits with a chainsaw. Not the most sophisticated of plots, I grant you, but brilliantly staged by Sam Raimi's maverick camera movements.

Despite starting out in a more or less detailed recreation of the cabin and featuring Bruce Campbell's vocal talents, you never feel like you're in the films. Interaction is selective and makes exploration and adventuring pretty unexciting, but more annoying is the way combat has been implemented. Since there's no one around to be possessed, deadites (floating demons incapable of causing any terror) appear out of nowhere, one after the other. And, because fighting

INPERSPECTIVE

The only *Resident Evil* clones worth playing are its sequels, although *Nocturne* is a small gem if you can put up with the awkward camera angles.

Resident Evil 3

Nocturne

Blair Witch

Evil Dead

LICENCE TO KILL

Or how to disappoint your fans

Evil Dead isn't the first great film licence to be killed by ineptitude. Almost every *Star Trek* game with the exception of *Voyager* is bad, and *Star Wars* has also been known to produce some real duds. *Force Commander*, for example, should have been one of the greatest real-time strategies ever made, but wasn't. The brilliant *Men In Black* got turned into yet another unplayable *Resident Evil* clone, while the priceless *Starship Troopers* licence was inexplicably wasted on a very shite strategy game. Then there's *The Fifth Element*, *Blair Witch* (parts two and three), *Trespasser* (*Jurassic Park* game), and the *Die Hard* Trilogy. Still, none have yet to achieve the failure of *ET* on the Atari, which did so badly millions of copies were buried in the desert.



The Texas Chainsaw Massacre house is a tad unnerving, until these stupid hellbillies turn up.



Evil Dead works better as simple adventure than a survival horror game.

ASHES TO ASHES

There are so many great things from the films that never get a look-in or are just badly presented: that disturbing rattling trap door; the raping tree (here it's just a big fat stomping trunk); the horrifying sounds; the camera flying through the air; the cheap but incredibly effective make-up of the possessed, along with their evil laughs. Even memorable

scenes like Ash's freshly buried girlfriend bursting from the ground and cackling maniacally are given a risible ghosts 'n' goblins treatment.

Ash, a loveable and idiotic action hero who drops a one-liner every time he breathes, was always crying out to become a videogame character (Duke Nukem was loosely based on him). But despite Bruce

Campbell's voice, he still seems a little flat.

Fans who see something they love translated into another medium – whether it's a book turned into a film or a comic turned into a TV series – always build fiercely high expectations, only to be inevitably disappointed. But *Hail To The King* would still be a poor game without the *Evil Dead* baggage. In fact, it would be

downright rubbish without the little magic it has stolen from the films.

There may be no raping trees, but our fond memories have been brutally violated. **PC**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb 3D **WE SAY** Go out and rent the films instead

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Bruce Campbell's voice
• Familiar settings • Logical puzzles
DOWNERS No atmosphere • Terrible combat • Neither frightening nor funny

56 A travesty



The chainsaw is effective, while it still has petrol.



The hogs could give the ones in *Hannibal* a beating.



Big enemies aren't any harder, they just take longer to hack to death.

CULT CLASSICS

Want to know more about the films?

Evil Dead was made in 1979 for a ridiculously low amount of money, using home-made special effects, released in 1982 and banned shortly afterwards.

The sequel, *Dead By Dawn* (1987), had a bigger budget and was considered to be as much a remake as it was a follow-up. In fact, only the first 15 minutes or so are a retelling – with a few changes – of the events in the first film (because they couldn't get footage of the original due to copyright). *DBD* also added more humour, culminating in the farcical trilogy-closer, *Army Of Darkness* in 1993.

Written off by many hardcore horror fans, *AOD* isn't really a horror film at all, but a medieval comic caper with plenty of gore served as a side dish. Ironically, while the film is more accessible to the general public and conceived as a big production, it flopped badly at the cinema. Sam Raimi was only 20 when he directed the first one, and it was his first feature movie. His current project is the massive Hollywood blockbuster *Spiderman*.



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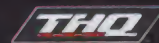
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STAR WARS: BATTLE FOR NABOO

★ £24.99 • LucasArts • Out now

Can LucasArts heap more shame on the greatest licence in gaming? Steve Hill leads to suffering

It has been mooted within the pages of this rag that I "don't like" *Star Wars*. It's a ludicrous claim to have to defend, but for the record I thoroughly enjoyed the film when my Dad (eventually) took me to see it in 1977, and again 20 years later when I took him. However, I don't own the box set, I don't have my monitor adorned with models of the various characters, and I don't think about it every waking moment. Which in this godforsaken industry pretty much puts me in a minority of one.

As for *The Phantom Menace*, I saw it in LA, and like most sane people concluded that it was muck. Admittedly my judgement may have been impaired by a 12-hour flight and the fact that I was busting for a piss, but having seen it again in more orthodox circumstances, I can confirm that I was right. But unlike more emotionally unstable patrons, I don't feel betrayed, and I'm not upset. Get a grip, it's only a film. There are far more important things in the world to worry about. Like *Planet Of The Apes*, for instance.

NABOO SUCKS

It's *The Phantom Menace* that we're dealing with here though, but it's not actually mentioned by name, probably in the hope of throwing people off the scent. There's no disguising the fact though, as you find yourself cruising around the verdant

INPERSPECTIVE

For the purist, *Rogue Squadron* is the better game, but to be honest there's not a lot in it. Can't think of any others.

Rogue Squadron

Battle For Naboo



Take that, Borvo The Hut, you big slug.

environs of Naboo in a variety of wholly unfamiliar craft. There are seven on offer, including a land speeder, a river buggy, some airborne affairs and even a bit of space combat.

To be honest, you don't really need me to tell you what it's like

fodder of standing up for the little man, betrayal and shooting stuff to a background of rousing music. It might not be 'proper' *Star Wars*, but even men with steel hearts can't help but feel a twinge of excitement when the trademark John Williams score kicks in. Likewise with the time-honoured scrolling text at the beginning, which depending on your personality (disorder) will have the hackles on the back of your neck rising, or see you vainly slapping the Escape key

In parts, *Battle For Naboo* is actually a right old laugh. There isn't a great deal of brain power required, but who wants to think anyway? LucasArts has sullied the *Star Wars* name with a slew of inferior titles, and while this does little to redress the balance,

"It's a piece of piss to play, there are no major shortcomings and it's mass-market fodder that can be enjoyed by anyone"

as it's written on the cover of the box in capital letters. 'FAST, FURIOUS ACTION IN THE TRADITION OF *STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON*' it boasts, and fast furious action in the tradition of *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* is exactly what you get. That is, 15 totally linear missions interspersed with passable cut scenes. However, the key difference is that in *Rogue Squadron* you were Luke Skywalker doing battle with the Evil Empire, felling those four-legged things and generally giving Dave Prowse a hard time. Here, you are Lt Gavin Sykes, mincing around the countryside, mildly irritating the Trade Federation.

LOST IN MUSIC

But despite the faceless nature of the levels, there's a vaguely entertaining narrative to be had, combining the usual *Star Wars*

perversely its lack of ambition is its saviour. It's a piece of piss to play, there are no major shortcomings and it's mass-market fodder that can be enjoyed by anyone. Which has to be better than a Jar Jar Binks doll. [M]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb
3D card **WE SAY** Poppycock. What you'll need is a P500, 128Mb of RAM and a decent 3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS High production values • No thinking required • Rousing music
DOWNERS It's not proper *Star Wars* • Limited gameplay • Repetitive

62 Merchandise for the masses



A Police Cruiser, cruising and policing.



Naboo, a green and pleasant land full of droids.



Gavin Sykes, who sounds like an estate agent, in his Flash Speeder.



The Naboo Starfighter, fighting, in the stars.



Don't get out of the boat, at least not until you've escorted that convoy.



"Suddenly I felt very underdressed."



Wandering about on your own can be hazardous to your health.



Healing your mates makes you feel all warm inside.



Summoning a dark elemental to fight at your side.

SUMMONER

★ £29.99 • THQ • Out now

Rhianna Pratchett was disturbingly keen to try her hand at unleashing the forces of darkness

Forrest Gump's mother got it wrong. Life isn't like a box of chocolates, but role-playing games most definitely are. No matter how appetising that box may look though, when you open it up there's always some kind of crap nougat creation that sticks to the roof of your mouth, pulls out all your fillings and makes you sound like Don Corleone on a bad day. And, of course, there's always, always the bloody orange cream chocolate.

When I first started playing Volition's *Summoner* I thought it was a total orange cream, in fact, I thought it was worse than that, I thought it was a strawberry cream. You play Joseph, the obligatory tormented hero, born with the mark of the Summoner, he became ostracised from society as a child when a demon

somewhere else, kill another guard, fall off chair in mild coma.

However, once you get out of the village and embark on your quest to find your former mentor Yago and search for the five rings of summoning, which are needed to defeat the dark armies that threaten your land, the truffle filled beauty of the game is revealed. The game's powerful 3D engine is given the full run around and the execution of the graphics, both during spell casting/summoning, and the general unfolding of the scenery is up there with *Sacrifice*.

VOICES OF REASON

The storyline, which is your usual fantasy fare, edges towards giving you a gentle massage around the throat rather than actually gripping it. This is simply because Volition has chosen to

"The game's powerful 3D engine is given the full run around, and the execution of the graphics is up there with *Sacrifice*"

he had summoned to protect his village from raiders went on a killing spree and wiped out most of his family and friends.

Joseph is now an adult and you pick him up in the ruins of a town that has been wiped out by a mysterious army bent on looking for the 'one with the mark'. For the first half an hour or so the gameplay runs like so: click, run, kill soldier, click, talk to boring villager, click, run

keep voice-overs and party interaction mainly in cut scenes, so most of the interaction is text based, which becomes at best tedious and means that a few of the more subtle nuances in the plot get lost. A few carefully chosen voice-overs could have really lifted the game somewhat, after all someone has to keep Tim Curry and David Warner in a job.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Summoner serves up some decent RPG fair, but *Baldur's Gate 2* is loads better. If you're just after looks though, you can't go past *Vampire*.

Baldur's Gate 2

Vampire: The Masquerade

Summoner

Evil Islands

CREATURE FEATURES

During the game you gain three other party members as well as the ability to summon a number of creatures, such as the Red Minotaurs, Stone Golems and Dark Elementals, to become your temporary fifth party member. The characters are an integral part of the storyline, so you will acquire them as the game progresses rather than having to actually seek them out. All the basic RPG character classes are covered in the game, there's

Flee the thief who's rather like a less sassy version of Annah from *Planescape: Torment*, Jekhar, your typical brawny warrior; and Rosalind who has the best spell casting abilities. Many of your missions will be party based, but some of the more sneaky operations only require one of your party members and some pretty stealthy talent.

SUMMONING UP

Another unfortunate strawberry cream aspect of the game is that although the gaming world is vast, there's simply not enough 'stuff' to satisfy a hungry role-player and those that feast on the likes of *Shadows Of Amn* will not be happy with the lack of depth on many of the subquests. There are too many crates and barrels that can't be opened, too many doors with nothing behind them and like a crap shag they leave you bored, dissatisfied and wondering if you should just give the whole thing up.

Despite some unwanted chewy bits *Summoner* is ultimately a good game, but it's frustrating in the respect that it could have been a truly brilliant game, except it misses the bull's eye in a few key areas, such as network PC and PC interaction as well as in its overall depth. But by far and away the most redeeming factors are the visuals, which will bring a tear to the eye of even the hardest of men. [A-]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 400 Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb 3D graphics card **WE SAY** Up it to a PIII 500MHz and make sure your video drivers are up to date

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Superb graphics • Decent storyline • Smooth handling
DOWNERS Not enough depth or environmental interaction • Too text reliant

70 Almost worth summoning up the cash for



Factories and labs can be upgraded.



After winning the American campaign you can try the Russian levels.



Plenty of multiplayer maps and options, but it's still basic.



If you run out of fuel, you can always get out and push.



This area is out of bounds due to foot and mouth.

ORIGINAL WAR

★ £29.99 • Virgin • Out now

Richie Shoemaker in pot calling kettle black shocker

There seems to be a creative drought at the moment in the games industry, especially when it comes to game names. Granted, when the game in question involves racing fag packets around a track, there are just a few words to choose your name from (Championship, One, Formula, Racing and Simulation), but for a real-time strategy game you could really go to town. How *Original War* came out of the hat,

however, is a mystery. Imagine if instead of Richard my parents had decided to call me Handsome – Handsome Shoemaker. Under the right lighting conditions fetching I may or may not be, but either way I would have had a rough time at school. The surname was bad enough.

TIME TO TRAVEL

Originality, of course, like beauty, rests in the eyes of the beholder and to be sure, *Original War* is

That said, being entirely story-driven, far more so than any other real-time strategy game to date, there is more interaction within the storyline itself, to the degree that *Original War* edges closer towards role-playing and tactical combat.

The gameplay too, though aimed squarely at real-time strategy fans, offers a wide degree of variation thanks to the need to manage units that are able to fill a variety of roles, from

must keep them alive. And if any do survive the mission their experience levels go up then, if you so wish, you can divert them to take on technical, repair or scientific tasks.

SNEAKING AROUND

While the game owes many of its ideas to *C&C*, *Original War* has a small debt outstanding to the makers of *Commandos*. Troops can crawl through grass, sneak around and climb into captured vehicles. Together then you'd have thought such influences enough to make *Original War* stand out, unfortunately the game suffers from being tactically devoid of entertainment. While you can to some degree nurture your forces, in the field of combat the game becomes much like any other RTS, where you just leave your troops to slug it out and reload the game if things go awry.

For every new and innovative feature in *Original War*, there is another elsewhere that drags the game down into mid-table obscurity. For instance, the clever use of narrative to drive the game often butts in at rather inopportune moments. Also quite annoying is the interface, which looks like it offers a wealth of tactical options, but doesn't actually offer much at all.

Thankfully, there are no pretences with the predictable AI, poor music and tired design of the vehicles and buildings.

Even though there's a lot to do – more so as the game goes on – it's only the base-building and resource management that make the game worth playing. A mediocre real-time strategy game with some very impressive knobs on, while *Original War* is to some degree original, it doesn't quite fulfil on its second name, the war bit. But then, with my shoemaking skills I can hardly complain. **EW**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 64Mb **WE SAY** Works well on a PII 450 and doesn't require a 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Good use of narrative to drive the game missions • Excellent line of sight • Emphasis on looking after your units
DOWNERS Strategically rather dull • Over-complicated interface • Predictable AI • Cheesy audio

63 Sort-of original but not very war-like

IN PERSPECTIVE

Even though a little on the complicated side, *Original War* excels at resource management. If it's war you're after, try something else.

C&C: Red Alert 2

Commandos Battle Pack

MechCommander

Original War

“The gameplay offers a wide degree of variation thanks to the need to manage units that are able to fill a variety of roles”

fairly innovative. The time-travelling story, where as a lieutenant in the US (or Russian) military you must head off to prehistoric Siberia and transport the deposits of Siberite (fuel to run the time machine) to Alaska, is pure '80s straight-to-video rubbish, told via sketch drawings and teeth-pulling voice-overs.

soldier to scientist, mechanic to engineer. As in more traditional RTS games, the aim is to find and hoard resources, erect buildings and churn out whatever units you need to win the map. To this there is also a degree of tactics. Your human resources are finite and you can't just clone hundreds of soldiers as you can in *C&C*, you



European co-operation at its finest.



Did you leave the handbrake on?



You break it, you buy it.

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON

★ £29.99 • Rage Software • Out now

"Milk and sugar?" says Paul Presley making an extremely crap Typhoon/Typhoo One-Cup joke

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

INPERSPECTIVE

Combining the worlds of hardcore and arcade flight sims is never easy, but Rage's influence on DID seems to have produced the best of both worlds. If you do miss having more involvement in things though, you should still be able to pick up *F-22 Total Air War* for a decent price.

Eurofighter Typhoon

F-22 Total Air War

Crimson Skies

I will always remember the day the hardcore flight sim fan in me died. During a demonstration of Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim 21* I was invited to try it out. I took the seat, started the engine on a Spitfire, gunned the throttle and headed down the runway. Then the plane went arse over tit, the fuselage broke in two and my pilot's war career came to an ignominious end. Realistic engine dynamics some might have said. Bollocks I said.

That was when I finally realised that I wanted to actually enjoy the bloody gameplay side of these things. Life's too short to spend worrying about wars and murder and all that real-world kind of stuff. If we're going to voluntarily take part in them in virtual worlds, let's at least make them fun. I want to be up there in the skies, scarf whipping in the wind as I catch enemy bullets with my teeth. I don't want to spend every sortie into enemy

territory staring at the knobs on a radar display and worrying about take-off weight figures. Plane goes up, plane goes down, and in between some things blow up. All to the sounds of dramatic music. Welcome, pretty much, to *Eurofighter Typhoon*.

OH SO QUIET

OK, it's not quite that simplistic, but that's the essence. When hardcore sim expert DID was bought by arcade action and lens flare specialist Rage about a year ago, no one really expected to see another flight sim come from the Warrington boys again. Rather than the presumed absorption of talent though, *Eurofighter Typhoon* has snuck up from almost nowhere, fully loaded with DID insignia, but with the very obvious influence of Rage's gameplay knowledge shining through beneath it.

The idea is that you manage a squad of six Eurofighter pilots through a typical Russian invasion

campaign set in Iceland. I say manage (as does most of Rage's publicity literature), but in truth you don't have much control over them other than in flight. The campaign engine is being pitched as the most realistic yet, and while there's certainly an authentic feeling to the way the war pans out (the gradual build-up of hostilities and the news reports of fighting in Europe are all too believable), the only real downside to the whole game is that you don't get any control over it.

You're at the mercy of the so-called 'virtual commanders', who make all the decisions about missions. Which can mean spending a fair bit of time just sitting around waiting for things to happen while obvious targets of opportunity could be getting the laser-guided bombing treatment. OK, so Rage/DID are trying to keep things light for the casual gamer here, but not everyone's afraid of a little strategy – look at *Command & Conquer* or, nearer to home, their own *Hostile Waters* for instance.



Dat's a spicy meatball.

CHILLY WILLY

None of which matters when you do take off. The meat of the game is the simulation and this is where *Typhoon* comes up trumps. It's an absolute blast to fly. No, it's not the most realistic thing to ever hit your screens, but nor is it trying to be. This is Hollywood flying with just a hint of realism to keep everyone happy. Want to target an enemy? Press T. Nothing more complex than that. Key moments in each flight are accompanied by dramatic music, the tension is notched up every time a missile is launched and the feeling of total immersion is fantastic. This isn't a simulation. This is fun.



Taking out an enemy runway the hard way.



Why choose Assassin or Arrow when there's Redhat?



Another valuable allied brothel bites the dust.

DID has been very clever in most respects with *Typhoon*. The setting is 2015, which means that you not only get the next generation of hardware to fly, (instead of the over-familiar and now boring Falcons and Eagles) but also some new experimental units to give it that sci-fi touch. The allied equipment is all European, meaning lots of RAF insignia to keep the home crowd happy. The setting is Iceland

“I want to be up there in the skies, scarf whipping in the wind as I catch enemy bullets with my teeth”

which is small enough to eliminate all those hour-long straight-line flights that the hardcore crowd love to recreate but which bore everyone else to tears. It also means plenty of hills, valleys and glaciers to keep life varied and low-level dogfights exciting. Basically, this is fun to play. For everyone. Not just the flight fanatics.

REVELLE

The truth is that the age of the hardcore flight sim is well and truly over. The once proud genre became an insular, niche market towards the end of the '90s and despite having some vocal supporters, there simply isn't a large enough audience to support the kind of games that DID, Simis,

Razorworks, Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse, Rowan and the rest used to create. You want proof? Read back over that list and tell me how many of them are either A: still in existence or B: still making gimmick-free, hardcore flight sims. Rowan perhaps, but every dying trend needs at least one misguided figurehead to act as a fiddling Nero to the burning Pompeii. A King Canute to the approaching

tide. An Andy Cole to the rest of the England squad.

Nope, the fact of the matter is that the hardcore flight sim fan is simply going to have to swallow his pride, hang up his home-made jumpsuit, dismantle his home-built 'virtual' cockpit and accept that fun and gameplay are the new rulers over AOA indicators and radar azimuth adjusters. DID saw the future early on when *Wargasm* appeared. It was just a little ahead of its time, that's all. Now with *Typhoon* the future of the genre has arrived. Let the complex campaign engine and simulation gubbins take care of themselves while the player gets on with the important business of shooting down bad guys and dodging heat-seeking missiles

like a latter-day Tom Cruise. To criticise *Typhoon* for not being a hardcore simulation is taking a blinkered approach to the future of the genre. Fearless leader Dave Woods came over while I played this in the office and asked me what I thought of it. "The hardcore crowd won't like it," I replied. "It's less of a simulation and more of a game." "Ah," *mon éditeur* muttered, "you mean even I might enjoy playing it?" It's a new world my friends, and if something as enjoyable as *Eurofighter Typhoon* is the result then bring it on, say I. You'll probably have more friends as a result. [C]

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** D3D graphics card **WE SAY** Surprisingly, it runs pretty well on the above specs (although a bit of extra memory always helps)

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS Emphasis on action over simulation • Very exciting in the air • Still enough details for propeller heads (not that they'll admit to it)
- DOWNERS Not enough involvement in the planning stages • Not enough detail in the pilot management

85 A flight sim for the masses



Enemy troops preparing to land. Better take care of them quick.

LOOK MA, NO PLANE

Ve haf vays of making you talk...

A number of things can happen to your pilots when the surface-to-air missile of life rams itself up the tailpipe of fate and you hit the eject button of destiny. Trying to make it to friendly territory is vital, as your downed crewmen have a nasty habit of being picked up by enemy soldiers and taken off for questioning – which, other than the comedy police beatings of Chase HQ, is the first time violent interrogation sequences have been seen in a video computer game. Hurrah for progress!



Bad luck son. I guess shouting "Help, downed allied pilot here!" at the top of your voice wasn't the best option after all.

"Tell us what you know about future *EastEnders* plot lines or Ivan here will break out the anal intrusion device."

A daring rescue by the SAS brings eventual relief for your pilot. As does some Preparation H.

FALLOUT TACTICS: THE BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

★ 29.99 • Interplay • Out now



Rescue prisoners such as this one to increase your standing with the Brotherhood.



This is taken from the intro movie. Cheeseorama.

The future is in a mess again. **Chris Anderson** has been drafted in to sort things out. God help us all

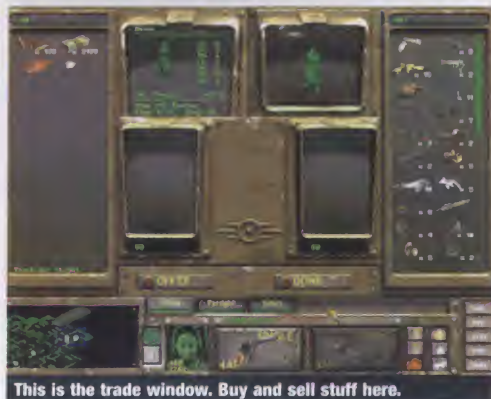
The first ten minutes you spend with *Fallout Tactics* go something like this. Install the game. Watch cheesy intro complete with awful voice-overs. Create characters, watch mission briefing. Start mission. Stop... stare... think... Haven't you seen this game somewhere before? Answer: yes. Remember *Fallout 1* and *2*. Suffer *déjà vu*. Contemplate whether to continue. Remember you *must* continue, after all you've paid good money for this, right?

Welcome to *Fallout Tactics*, which is basically *Fallout 3* by any other name. We can only assume

it's not called *Fallout 3* because the game's developers felt it was not sufficiently different to the first two games to merit putting a 3 at the end of it. They're not wrong. As long as you accept this basic premise and you want to know how the latest game in the *Fallout* series has been refined (as opposed to what's 'new'), you will not be disappointed in what it has to offer. There are elements of *Fallout Tactics* that make it a different playing experience to the first two titles, but they are by no means an improvement. If anything, the major changes in the new game are a big step backwards. For example...



Night-time missions are particularly, er, dark.



This is the trade window. Buy and sell stuff here.



You are fully briefed before every mission, which is handy.



Your characters have a wealth of skills and stats.



SOMETHING'S MISSING

Traditionally, the *Fallout* series has been heavy on NPC interaction and dialogue, and freedom of exploration in the game zones. Not anymore. *Fallout Tactics* takes the combat missions from the first two games, and more or less dumps everything else. In other words, it's low on atmosphere and high on combat. Depending on the type of player you are, this will be good news or bad news. If you liked the turn-based combat from the previous games, and would rather dispense with atmosphere-creating formalities and get straight into the thick of the action then *Fallout Tactics* is the game for you. Each of the game's missions is introduced with a quick briefing from your

commanding officer, then you're straight into the battle zone to get on with it. Complete the mission and it's back to base to repeat the whole process over again.

Presumably in an attempt to add a degree of variety to the proceedings, the game's developers have introduced a real-time mode to complement the turn-based mode that *Fallout* veterans have become accustomed to. Simply put, it doesn't work. All the missions are clearly designed for the turn-based mode, and rather than redesign the missions for real time, the developers seem to have simply taken the 'turns' out and allowed the game to flow freely. You have to wonder if they actually tried playing the game in real time before releasing it.

With missions that require stealth and careful planning, you need time to think. This is not a traditional RTS: you can't just run in with all guns blazing and hope to succeed. Try playing *Fallout Tactics* in real time and you'll find your squad gets 'spotted' every

going to see more action than you will when you realise how quick the enemy is to get on your case after you've been spotted from what are often incredibly long distances. Much sneaking and creeping around is necessary if you are to stand any chance of

three or four enemies. In this respect, *Fallout Tactics* is reminiscent of some of the early real-time strategy games, which were notable only for the awful AI of your units. Most of you, I suspect, will wind up dumping this mode quickly and revert to traditional turn-based combat which, it appears, is how the game was meant to be played in the first place. Back we go then to familiar ground.

“Watch in horror as half your crew get stuck in walls or worse still, walk into the wrong room and get wasted by the enemy”

time they move and are quickly overwhelmed, raising alarms that alert all the enemies in the area to your presence, which in turn forces you to retreat and fight with your back to the wall. It is possible to play the game in real time, but it's a slow and laborious process. The quick-save key is

completing the missions in real time. To make things worse, your squad's pathfinding techniques are unforgivably bad at times. Click on a spot you want your crew to move to then watch in horror as half of them get stuck in walls or worse still, walk into the wrong room and get wasted by

AFTER YOU SIR
Turn-based strategy is not exactly the most popular genre around these days, given that the whole world seems to be playing the latest RTS they can get their hands on. If *Fallout Tactics* proves anything, it's that in the right hands, turn-based strategy can

WALKTHROUGH

TYPICAL TACTICS

This is a typical mission in *Fallout Tactics*. You've been asked to infiltrate the enemy and return to base with fusion batteries needed for vital research. Better get on with it then...



1 This is your insertion point. You start every mission in a safe area. A bit of exploration is in order to scout it out. You can also call up a mission map if you want to know exactly where to go.



2 These villagers are friendly. One of them provides information on the area, warns of poison and radiation, and hands over some items that will help as well. What a nice chap.



3 Next up is an underground bunker. There are lots of poisonous creatures here that don't do a lot of damage but their poison kills you slowly.



4 After much killing of beasties the last of the three batteries is uncovered. Time to make your way to the exit grid and get the hell out of there.



5 The green area on the map indicates where the exit is. After exiting, go back to base to get another mission and repeat the whole process.

IF ONLY...

Fallout Tactics is a good-looking turn-based game. In a perfect world, all turn-based games would look this good. Specifically, *X-COM Apocalypse* could really do with a remake with much better graphics. Were this to happen, the turn-based genre, which is slowly decreasing in popularity would suddenly be given a new lease of life and RTS would once again have healthy competition. Probably.

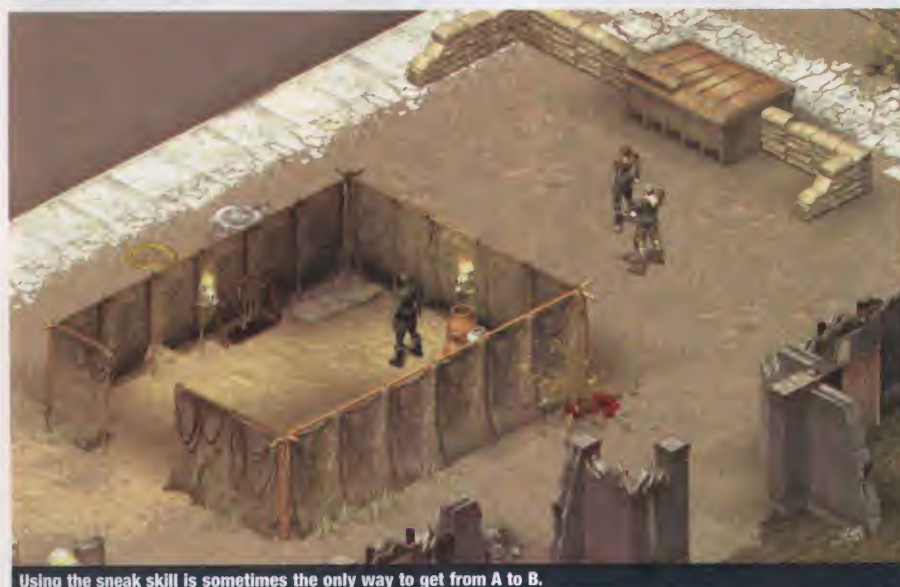




There is great use of lighting in places.



Head to base and recruit new members for your squad. You'll need them.



Using the sneak skill is sometimes the only way to get from A to B.



The story is told through stills and comedy voice-overs.

← be just as engrossing as an action-based strategy game. It's very reminiscent of *X-COM* in more ways than one. Many hi-tech weapons and items come into play as you make your way through the missions, and your squad members improve after every mission, providing, of course, they don't die along the way. Each member gets experience for every kill, and when they get enough experience they gain a level and earn skill

IN PERSPECTIVE

Fallout Tactics is better-looking than *Fallout 2* but doesn't have the same depth. *X-COM Apocalypse* looks very dated now, but it's still an excellent game.

Fallout Tactics

Fallout 2

X-COM Apocalypse

points. There is a wide variety of skills to put your skill points into, and you can customise your squaddies to a large degree by concentrating them in different skill areas, eventually helping them to become 'experts' in their chosen field. To the credit of *FT*'s creators, you can easily see the effects of your background skill-tinkering on the battlefield. For example, it's vital to have at least one crew member with a high skill in doctoring or first aid, otherwise you'll spend a fortune on stimpaks (health packs) before every mission. Lock-picking is very handy too if you don't want to miss out on some of the better items on the battlefield. The sneak skill is not only useful, it's absolutely essential on missions where you need to get a squad member into a heavily guarded area undetected, unless you want to spend an age breaking down the enemy front line.

The actual missions, while perfectly playable and enjoyable,

eventually begin to feel linear and predictable, and you will find yourself playing the game not so much for the sake of the game itself, but to get new and better items and also to see how the story progresses.

Despite the wealth of items to be found and the ability to customise your units, *Fallout Tactics* still seems to be lacking that certain something needed to both hold the missions together

“It's frustrating to get one of your squaddies close to the action, only to discover the silly sod is low on action points”

and give you the incentive to push further and deeper into the heart of the game. *X-COM* had base-building and research, which acted as a convincing and enjoyable diversion to its tactical combat. *Fallout Tactics* has, well, nothing. Also, it's questionable how many people still want to play a game that defines the

movement of its characters with 'action points'. It's a bit frustrating to say the least to get one of your squaddies close to the action, ready to perform whatever task you had in mind, only to discover the silly sod is low on action points and can't do anything until his next turn comes around. This style of gameplay was perfectly acceptable before real-time strategy games came of age, but *Fallout Tactics* (and other games of its ilk) really need to make a convincing move to real time if they are to survive in today's highly competitive market. That entails designing the game in real time from the ground up, as opposed to designing it in turn-based mode then taking the

you will play for weeks on end (the missions are too repetitive for that), but there's enough in it to challenge you and keep you amused and off the streets for a few days at least.

Fallout Tactics is no great revolution for the series but rather more of the same with some bits taken out. It's still as playable, but it may prove too linear for diehard turn-based fans, and RTS fans will most likely just lose patience with it and go back to *Red Alert 2* and co. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 266
Memory 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** Plays better with 128Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Vast wealth of weapons and items • Turn-based-game in good graphics shocker • *Fallout* veterans will feel very much at home with this
DOWNERS Linear and repetitive with repeated play • Real-time mode is not fooling anyone • Worst voice-overs we've heard for quite some time

79 Perfectly playable, but eventually repetitive

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON



NOTHING STANDS IN ITS WAY



Officially
endorsed by

**Eurofighter
Typhoon**

Rage

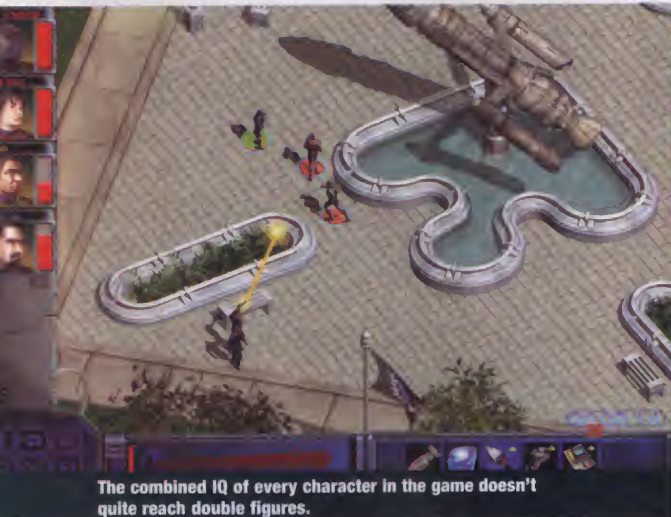
www.rage.com

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Guards can hear you if you get too close, so this graphical representation can be very helpful.



The combined IQ of every character in the game doesn't quite reach double figures.



The plot does contain some interesting twists, though it's hardly edge-of-your-seat stuff.



Whatever you do, avoid those field-of-sight areas.

STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

£34.99 • Activision • Out now

But this team's rubbish, says **Mark Hill**.
Where's Picard when you need him?

They usually come in big boxes, intent on complete domination, assimilating all that lies in their path on a quest for true perfection. Many fear them and will engage illegal warp levels to get away. But resistance is not of much use. They come at you relentlessly, adapting to your defences and multiplying quicker than you can possibly cope with. You are only human after all, and they are *Star Trek* licensed games. This is a species that will go to any lengths to get you to part with your money, and will sleep with any genre to get where it wants. It also has a history of low quality control, despite the recent success of *Voyager – Elite Force*, and tagging the license on to any established game with as little effort as possible. *Away Team* is another *Star Trek* drone that will surely face these kinds of accusations, and not without reason. It borrows heavily from many squad games – especially *Commandos* and *Jagged Alliance 2* – and would have a lot of trouble making friends without the official endorsement. So is it any good?

PHASER SQUAD

First let me tell you what it's all about. You control an elite and secret squad of Federation officers trained for stealth operations and high-risk missions. Not unlike the Elite Force from Raven's shooter, but operating within the Alpha Quadrant and looking much smaller. The plot involves most of the major *Trek* races, and re-introduces the conspiracy theory exploited so successfully in a few *Next Generation* and *DS9* episodes, with a faction called The Wardens controlling high levels of Starfleet Command and forcing you to infiltrate Romulan,

Klingon and Federation bases. Brent Spiner – never one to miss a quick buck – once again provides the voice of Data, while Worf also makes a vocal appearance.

Good tactical team-based games in the old *X-COM* vein are hard to come by, despite the proximity of *Commandos 2* and *Fallout Tactics* (reviewed on page 62), so the combination of isometric prowling and the *Star Trek* universe make the first few hours pleasantly enjoyable. The game isn't turn-based but you can pause it at any time to take a good look around you and decide on the best course of action, something which instantly appeals to my laid-back approach to strategy.

Then the problems begin – and there are plenty of them.

DUMB AND DUMBER

Let's begin with one of the most irritating ones. When you shoot someone you need to get the whole team to do it, otherwise you have to spend 20 seconds exchanging phaser fire – even on the 'kill' setting – before they die

INPERSPECTIVE

There are plenty of tactical squad teams out there, and they are almost all better than *Away Team*. Of course, this is the only *Star Trek* one though.

Jagged Alliance



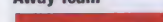
Fallout Tactics



Commandos



Away Team



Odium

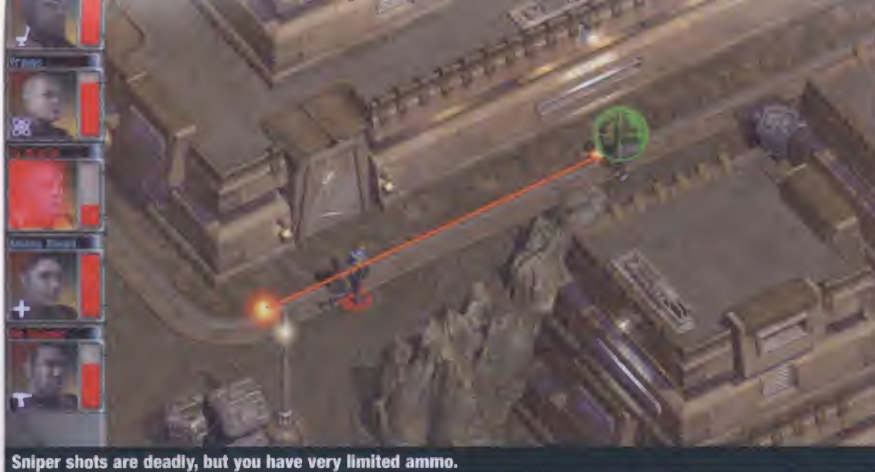


The resolution is stuck well down, but you can zoom in and out.

(or you could just stun them, a quicker but less permanent solution). The problem is that when you select all the team to shoot, only those with the same weapon as the leader of the group will do so. This means that if Worf is on your side or you want your security members to use their phaser rifles, you need to go to each character one by one and select their weapon. If you don't, you could end up with only one person firing, caught with his pants down. Then, next time you encounter a foe, you have to go through it all again. Arduous, to say the least.

The game goes automatically into pause mode when one of your team gets shot. This is just as well, since characters won't do anything unless you make them and will quite happily stand still while a Romulan melts their face with slow and deliberate cruelty. Yes, your team is helplessly stupid. There's no option to make them shoot on sight or at the very least return fire.

Not that the intelligence points have been spent on your enemies. What a bunch of saps they are. Whenever they see a fallen body they'll run to it, but then completely ignore it if they don't see you near it. There was one map where I'd managed to kill one Klingon at one end of the screen and then another one at



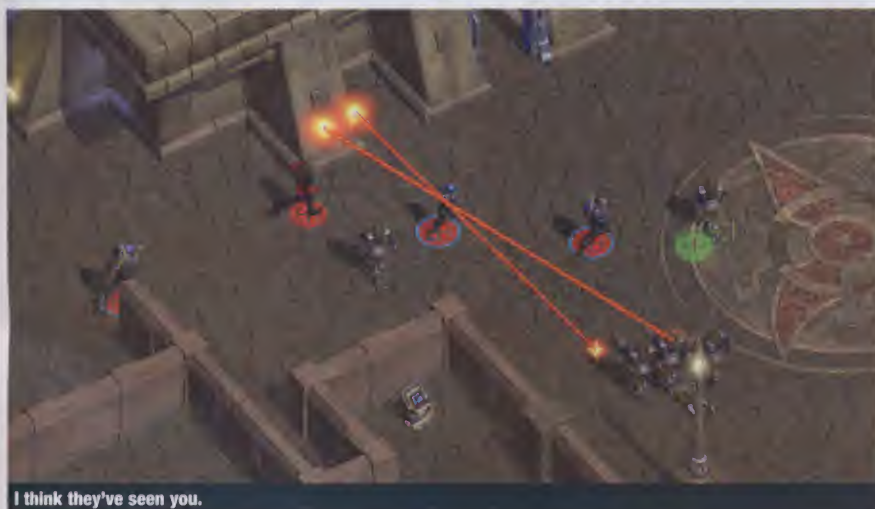
Sniper shots are deadly, but you have very limited ammo.



The Borg will adapt to your phasers quickly, so you need to be resourceful.



In some missions you have to stun everyone and avoid killing.



I think they've seen you.

the other end. Because this was a critical point in the map, about a dozen Klingons materialised out of thin air on discovery of the first body, and then spent the next ten minutes running to one body, forgetting all about it after seeing

your top scientist can operate a miniature cloaking device, so he can sneak past guards unseen, if not unheard. Elsewhere, you have transporter gadgets so you can make the fallen bodies of your enemies disappear conveniently,

“The *Star Trek* game is a species that will go to any lengths to get you to part with your money, and will sleep with any genre”

the other one, running to that one and repeating the whole thing *ad infinitum*. Even if you should fall into the line of sight of a guard, you'll find another display of goldfish memory as they promptly forget you once you've run far enough away.

YOU WILL NOT BE ASSIMILATED

It's not all bad, though. There are lots of Trekkie devices – which only certain members of the team can use – to make the missions more interesting. For example,

phasers that can be overloaded to use as grenades and audio decoy tools – as well as the usual array of proximity grenades and sniper rifles you'd expect in this type of game.

You soon learn to make the most of the Artificial Idiocy and completing early missions is a doddle. Later levels, though, get tougher and you reach a point where you suddenly realise you really should have brought that ugly sniper along to take out that Klingon sentry, and just how useful a medic would be when

your team is at the end of its health and you're only halfway through the map, making you start all over again with other characters. Whether you actually bother to do so will depend on how much patience you have. If you're after a good squad-based tactical title we suggest you head on over to *Fallout Tactics*. **PC2**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor 266
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** A 3D card **WE SAY** Should run fine with that

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Squad-based tactics • Good voice acting • Undemanding
DOWNERS Riddled with small, annoying glitches • Not many tactics involved • Dreadful AI •

61 Tactical mayhem. Literally

WALKTHROUGH

END

AWAY TEAM

So you've read the review and still don't know what it's all about. Try this then



1 Every mission starts with a briefing, setting up the plot and giving you specific orders.



2 Data gives you a step-by-step guide during the first level. Ta very much...



3 First kill is easy, if a bit cowardly. Shoot this Romulan in the back.



4 Next, a nice sniper shot. Make sure you check their field of sight first, though.



5 Concussion grenades are invaluable. And here's how you do it.



6 Stealthy kills are also possible if you crouch behind them. Doh! He's seen you.

KILL KILL KILL

Mindless death and violence? In a *Star Trek* game?

There is one aspect in which *Away Team* really does buck the *Star Trek* trend: the almost complete lack of patronising humanitarianism. While most other licensed games avoid death and blood – *Elite Force* included – this one offers it in buckets. You are even authorised to make unnecessary killings. “We suspect these Federation officers are under the control of The Wardens, so use whatever means necessary,” you are told at the start of one mission. Can you imagine Picard giving such an order? Especially when you consider that they are not willingly against the Federation and could theoretically be cured of their treason. Not that we're complaining. Running around a Starfleet ship killing every officer on board indulges one of our little fantasies, particularly when you can imagine that they're such tiresome characters as Wesley or Riker.



Finally, a *Star Trek* game with lots of killing.



Passengers are shocked as a train makes it to the station without being derailed.



"Hands-up, baby, hands-up!"



Well, it just wouldn't be right without a hanging...

DESPERADOS

★ £29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

Keith Pullin is more of an old git than a young gun, but he still knows how to ride a mule

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

INPERSPECTIVE

Desperados beats the original *Commandos* hands down and there's not much of a fight coming from *America*. If it's small, fiddly strategy you want and patience is one of your virtues, *Desperados* is the only choice. Watch out for *Commandos 2* though...

Commandos

America

Desperados

Wild West games aren't exactly rife on the PC. In fact, until a couple of months ago and the arrival of *America*, you'd be hard pushed to think of a single decent one. Well, now we've got a grand total of two thanks to Germany's Spellbound Software, and this one is the business.

Desperados is an intense strategy game along the lines of *Commandos*, where precision and patience are the overriding factors. The graphics are small but detailed and the emphasis is on using wisdom before Winchester rifles. There's also a very powerful film-based atmosphere with characters and plot all inspired by numerous spaghetti and Hollywood westerns. You could say that *Desperados* is the thinking man's Clint Eastwood.

WRONG SIDE OF THE TRACKS

Most of the action takes place in the south-western states of the

USA near the Mexican border. The year is 1881 and a spate of train robberies near the town of El Paso is ruining the famous Twining's & Co Railroad Company. It's up to you to discover who's behind this outrage and ultimately claim the \$15,000 reward.

The six desperate bounty hunters under your command are a colourful bunch of men and women boasting a surprising range of skills. Sam is a dab hand at throwing dynamite and using heavy weaponry; Doc McCoy has his knockout gas-filled balloons; there's the gorgeous Kate who's got a body and knows how to use it and Mia Young who has a cheeky little monkey. Sanchez is a typical Mexican bruiser, but a particularly handy man to have around in a bar brawl. In total there are more than 30 different ways to kill, knock out, startle or confuse your enemies.

Leading all these misfits is John Cooper, the main hero of the

piece and a man who sounds like he's been doing bad voice-overs for film trailers all his life. Actually,



It's not all desert and cacti you know.

if we're going to be completely honest about this, *Desperados* is packed full of irritating accents that make you want to strangle

the nearest Yankie – but anyway we digress...

At the start of the game Mr Cooper is on his own and in a tutorial. There's a lot to think about in *Desperados*, and the mouse interface isn't always as smooth as it should be in a game of this type. Hotkeys are the order of the day and the tutorial makes a point of emphasising this, so pay close attention otherwise you will flounder very quickly.

As you progress through the game more of your illustrious colleagues join the group. With each new arrival another basic tutorial introduces you to their abilities and then it's on to the next instalment of high jinks and gun-toting tomfoolery. It may seem like overkill on the

“Leading all these misfits is John Cooper, a man who sounds like he's been doing bad voice-overs for film trailers all his life”



Lovely saloon – shame about the no-cheating rule though.

tutorial front and that's probably true, but there's no denying the fact that with the amount of guns, gadgets and interesting goodies available, you need all the help you can get figuring them out.

CREATIVE PANIC

It's actually amazing how creative you can be when you're forced into a corner. Take the Mississippi Steamer level where you have to rescue feisty Kate from a cabin on board the boat. At the start of that stage, you glance at the amount of enemies prowling around and predict there's no way on earth you're going to get anywhere near

that woman. Have a little faith though – in *Desperados*, even the most, ahem, desperate predicament can be overcome with a bit of brainpower, a lot of trial and error, and a massive amount of quick-saving.

In this particular situation a second, more analytical look at the mini-map reveals any number of potential plans from A through to Z. *Desperados* is all about improvisation; if an alley is not patrolled get your team in there quick and then worry what to do



A well-placed slash of the knife and two Mexicans bite the dust.

next. If the entrance to the boat is heavily guarded, then look for another way in. Alternatively try cutting the rope securing the lifeboat hanging above the

guards' heads so that it drops and crushes them to death. The possibilities are endless – it's just learning to spot them.

QUALITY GERMAN ENGINEERING

Obviously the quieter you are the further you'll go – and we're not just talking about crawling along the floor in the shadows. Most objects in the game have a noise value, which may help or hinder your progress. For example, jumping on a horse and galloping through town is an extremely conspicuous and stupid act. Sprinting through a courtyard amidst a squealing, screeching mass of pigs and chickens is also likely to attract attention. You need to think about where you are. If you're next to a waterfall and spot an enemy, shooting them is likely to escape interest because the sound of the rushing water will cover your gunshots. Ultimately, the beautifully detailed surroundings of *Desperados* are not just superficial; they are fully interactive and an integral part of the gameplay.

Working within these brilliant aesthetics is a superb line-of-sight routine. All NPCs (including civilians) can look left, right, up and down. If someone is positioned on the roof of a building, they stand a much better chance of seeing you sneak into a building on the other side of the road than



The Doc sure knows how to pick a lock...



Nothing changes.

spotting you entering the building they are currently stood atop. It's all about physics and angles of course, and who better than the Germans to get that side of things absolutely spot-on?

RIDING INTO THE SUNSET

Desperados is the best western we've ever played on a PC – on top of that it's also a good strategy game. True, there are those who will find it tough to get into, but it's worth persevering with, especially if you're a fan of Clint Eastwood, John Wayne, Lee Van Cleef and the rest. *Desperados* is rich in western film culture and rich in entertainment – buy it or get out of town. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII 233
Memory 64Mb RAM, 600Mb HD space,
4Mb video card **WE SAY** PIII 500 with
128Mb RAM and 8Mb 3D graphics card

PCZ VERDICT

- UPPERS Great action-packed movie plot • Detailed and beautiful maps and locations • Excellent sound • Superb 3D modelling and line-of-sight programming • Amazing and evocative rendered cut-scenes
- DOWNERS Cheesy script with woeful accents during game • Awkward mouse control • Tricky to get into

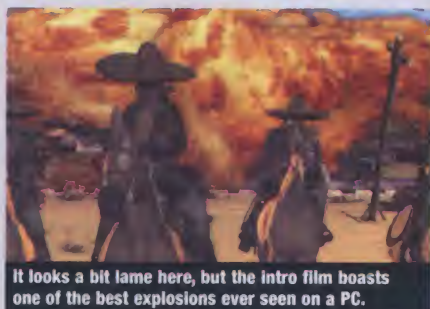
82 Clint on the PC

POKER FACE

For a few dollars more...

To give *Desperados* more of a spaghetti-western feel Spellbound inserted a few rendered cut-scenes into the adventures of our six bandits, and they work really well. For once these movie-like sequences are not full of burnt-out actors delivering monotone lines with

the conviction of McDonalds counter staff. Instead you have action sequences that are 100 per cent computer generated, with loads of attention to detail, they really are lovingly created in every sense of the word. It's very, very *Ty Story* and it's very, very good.



It looks a bit lame here, but the intro film boasts one of the best explosions ever seen on a PC.



The poker sequence features sombre Mexicans squinting as well as grown women looking sexy.

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UEFA CHALLENGE

★ £29.99 • Infogrames • Out now

If it's a football game then it must be *Steve Hill*. It pays to specialise, you know

Football is the most popular sport on earth, and football games are one of the most popular genres. The PC is the most powerful games machine on the planet, but is there a game on it worthy of the hallowed sport? Is there bollocks? *FIFA* is lapped up by simpletons on a regular basis, but if you haven't already worked it out, it's not that good. As for the rest, it says much about their quality that *FIFA* stands head and shoulders above them.

Here's another pretender then, straddled with the obligatory superfluous licence and a flashy intro, featuring ten of the world's best players in action. Naturally each player involved was given loads of cash, and the marketing skunks must be chuffed to know that nobody is ever going to watch the intro more than once, with a sizeable proportion not even affording it that courtesy. Whatever money was left for development was obviously lavished on Infogrames' Sheffield studio, the developer formerly known as Gremlin, and formerly responsible for *Actua Soccer*.

HURRY UP BARRY

While it's not exactly *Actua Soccer 4*, the stench of that series does linger in the game's darker crevices. Veteran commentator Barry Davies has again been hauled out (of the audio library), and as ever he does a sterling job, bringing a touch of class to the proceedings. However, as with all commentaries, it begins to repeat,

“The tackling is reminiscent of Graeme Souness at his most career-threatening”

and there are only so many times you can hear him describe a goal being “tucked away with aplomb” without wanting to twist your own brain out. To compound matters further, Davies is joined by erstwhile hard man, Graeme Souness, offering glib opinions through a moustache that would do credit to a Greek waiter.

It's quite apt that Souness should be involved, as some of

IN PERSPECTIVE

Begrudgingly, we have to admit that *FIFA* is the best football game on the PC. Any of the last five or so instalments will do, as they're all the bleeding same.

FIFA 98/99/2000/2001

UEFA Challenge

International Football 2000

UEFA Champions League 99/00

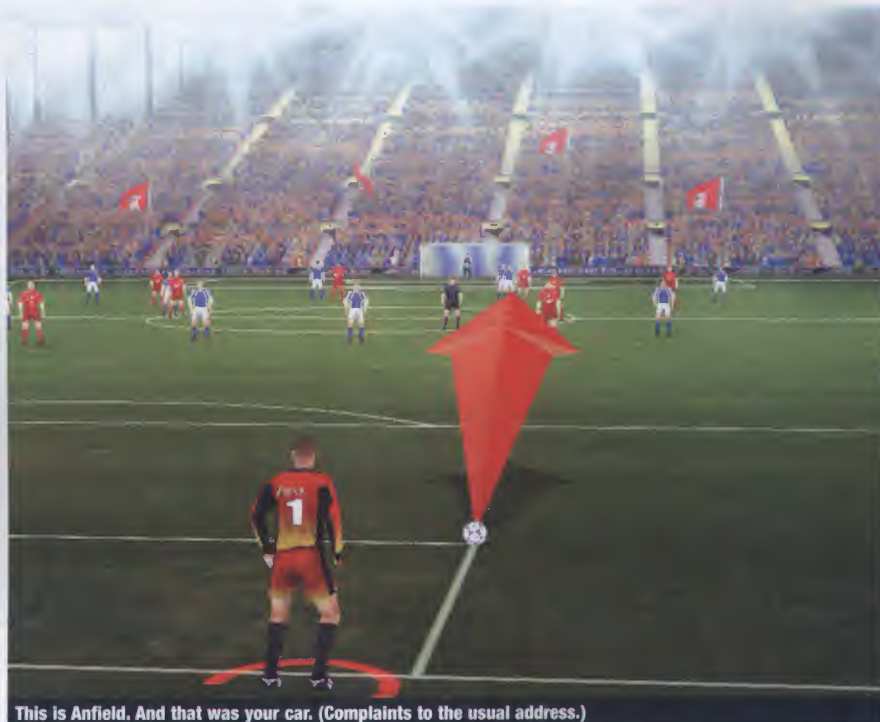
the tackling is reminiscent of the Liverpool midfielder at his most career-threatening. The slide tackle is so exaggerated as to prove virtually unusable, but is thankfully supplemented by a more controlled ‘foot-in’ option. The passing is either to feet or a lofted ball of variable length, and the shooting relies on a power bar, à la *Actua Soccer*. Sprinting is optional, and a host of largely useless tricks have been thrown in to appease the *FIFA* crowd.

WHIP IT

With practice, it's possible to knock the ball around with some style, and also to discover a fairly surefire way of scoring. A through ball down the wing, whipped into the box and twatted first time will often reap dividends, and games consist of little more than trying to manufacture this move. It's possible to score the occasional screamer from outside the area, but ultimately it's a hollow

experience, proving largely unsatisfying. As for periphery, there's a host of tournaments, but for some unknown reason the UEFA Cup isn't among them, despite the high-profile licence.

At the end of the day, you only need one football game. This isn't it. What you want is a PlayStation and a copy of *ISS Pro Evolution 2*. If you don't like it, I'll give you the money myself. Or maybe not. [PCZ]



This is Anfield. And that was your car. (Complaints to the usual address.)



Where else can you hear 'aplomb' being used?



Did we mention that the penalties are rubbish?



Figo thinks about having a pop.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
8Mb AGP or PCI 3D accelerator card **WE**
SAY Nonsense. It barely got by on a P400
with 128Mb of RAM

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Barry Davies • Vague
attempt at player likenesses

⬇ **DOWNERS** • No headed goals • No
proper tournaments •

54 UEFA challenged

TRIBES 2

£29.99 • Sierra • Out now



Look before you cross, because getting run over is now a real problem.

A follow-up to *Tribes*? This can only mean war. Phil Wand gets suited and booted

**PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE**

It's strange, but you'd think nobody in the UK played *Tribes*. Jump into a game of *Team Fortress Classic* and you'll see messages from people arranging their next *Counter-Strike* session. Join an *Unreal Tournament* server and at least two players will be arguing the case for *Quake*, with someone else reminiscing about the amazing port of *Doom* on the Atari Jaguar. But never do you hear someone say, "Stuff this hostage rescue crap, I'm off to play *Tribes*".

Why is that? Let us not forget that, at the time of its launch, *Tribes* was a radical departure from the norm. Significantly, it was the first multiplayer arcade blaster with an emphasis on team co-ordination. The sci-fi fantasy graphics were slick and rapid, with lag nothing like the issue it is in *Counter-Strike*, and manned vehicles were not just part of the landscape but were there to be used, adding a

whole new dimension to strategy. It was even cheaper than most of its rivals, and had a well-stocked trophy cabinet thanks to positive reviews in the gaming press. For the answer, one can look to the new features that Dynamix has included in its much-anticipated follow-up, *Tribes 2*.

Most obviously, there are the spesh new graphics – and don't say you didn't notice. Next to the pale colours and jagged edges of the 1998 original, the latest game is really rather arresting. Gone are the old 16-bit textures, and in their place are intricate 32-bit tapestries that give every level real depth and colour. Trees, shrubs and cacti dot the landscape and make handy resting places for your eyeballs. Previously, vast swathes of desert meant you ended up with your ocular muscles going into spasm, snow-blinded by miles and miles of the same coloured landscape.

ARE WE THERE YET?

Thankfully, the long slog between your base and the enemy's is not as boring a journey as it once was. Hills rise grandly above you, and dales tumble away beneath you. New ground vehicles – Grav



Cycle, Grav Tank and Forward Base (used to establish an inventory station nearer the front line) – allow you to get from A to B in the shortest time, although the latter seems to have blancmange for suspension and is difficult to control over rough terrain.

Depending on how high you have the detail levels set, all objects are chased along by soft

shadows that add dollops of realism to every scene, with draw distance and fogging heightening the sense of grand scale. It should be said that previous testing of the beta product revealed that elaborate outdoor scenes really took their toll on hardware, and were prone to sloppy frame-rates. This release version is now much smoother, and with a few tweaks

to the graphics settings – sliders are provided to allow near infinite combinations of special effects – a middle of the road 400MHz PIII was able to dash along without a hint of a wheeze. Mind you, you'll still need a 1GHz processor and monster video hardware to appreciate everything at full pelt.

Making progress is just as before: dead easy, but an art all the



When negotiating craggy terrain, you're prone to aerial assaults.

HEADS UP!

Those screen icons explained...



- 1 Chat window
- 2 Enemy unit carrying multiple enemies, denoted by multiple red triangles
- 3 Single-seater friendly craft, denoted by single green triangle
- 4 Friendly unit health and their name
- 5 Scoring window tracking team scores
- 6 Packs, grenades, mines, health kits and beacons
- 7 Your weapons
- 8 Directional indicators showing key objectives
- 9 Orientation compass
- 10 Energy meter for jet-pack and energy-based weapons

same. Seasoned warriors will be glad to hear that it's still possible to ski into valleys (in the original, players learned it was possible to tap the jump button while traversing slopes, thus gliding at speed over the surface). Dynamix has now made it a feature rather than an exploit, ensuring that the weightier classes aren't able to pull the same stunt. Of course, your trusty jump pack remains integrated with your armour, allowing you to right-click yourself out of ruts and away from trouble. It's still amazing to watch even the most dewy-eyed

newbie making rapid, graceful progress across the roughest terrain, and rather alarming when veteran players descend on you from a great height, plasma gun barking fizzing globs of death at the top of your head.

BELLY'S GONNA GET YA

As with its predecessor, *Tribes 2* offers players a choice of three armour classes: Light, Medium and Heavy. The agile Light class is best suited to flag-running and scout duty, Medium class to attacking, and Heavy class to eating pies. However, players remain free to



Targeting lasers allow guided missiles to lock on to enemy units.

adopt roles which suit team tactics, even though the new Command Circuit feature (see boxout) means contradictory orders arrive thick and fast. For example, Heavy classes may decide to hop aboard a Transport or Grav Tank – given the larger maps, they'll need to pack a picnic and loo roll if walking – to help their team break through enemy lines, and trust that other

example, has only three weapon slots and cannot use the Fusion Mortar, whereas the Heavy belly class has five slots but cannot carry the Laser Rifle. Knowing who has what, especially when faced with an adversary, is all part of the strategy.

Along with a menacing new faction, the Bioderm Hordes, the Shocklance and Missile Launcher

and is used primarily to lock on to enemy vehicles and destroy them before they get close enough to be a threat. Used in conjunction with a skilled hand and targeting laser, it's also possible to knock opposition jet-packers out of the sky. As with the original game, the colossal size of the maps combined with the way players remain airborne during combat serve to slow the tempo of the game, and adrenaline levels never peak as high as in rival shooters like *Unreal*. Whether this is a bad thing or not depends on your liking for a triple figure pulse rate.

“It's still amazing to watch even the most dewy-eyed newbie making rapid, graceful progress across the roughest terrain”

team members are keeping the base defences in order.

Each class is able to carry up to five weapons, plus six grenades and three mines, although exactly what you carry is subject to restrictions. The Light class, for

make their debut in *Tribes 2*. The former is much like the knife in *Team Fortress Classic*, and when used correctly enables stealthy players to sneak up behind their foe and kill them with a single jab. The latter fires guided missiles,

MULTI-TALENTED

Next to the graphics, the most important addition to *Tribes 2* is the single-player game. Along with five training missions that give newbies a more gentle

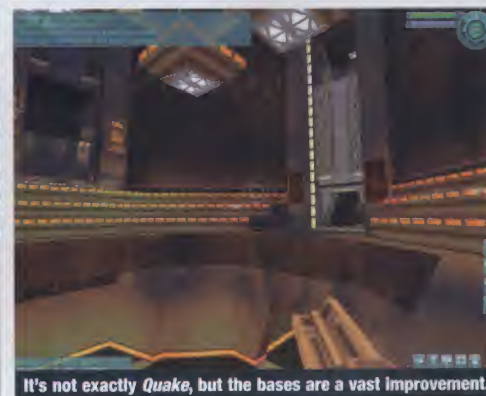




As vehicles are built, a queue forms behind the control pad.



Our Forward Base is bombed by enemy bastards.



It's not exactly Quake, but the bases are a vast improvement.

THE COMMAND CIRCUIT

Now where did I put that grenade...?

The Command Circuit, or CC for short, is essentially a *C&C*-style panoramic view of the *Tribes 2* world, allowing teams to see at a glance where equipment, objectives and players are located. Working the screen takes a lot of practice, as its keyboard controls are somewhat different to the regular layout, but the results can be worthwhile. Commands can be generated and issued to individual team members, for example requesting that a particular man repair a Solar Panel, or perhaps move forward to a waypoint. Cameras allow you to see the action, even if the player in question is piloting a vehicle.

CC even allows you to switch to gunner's view on base defences, permitting you to take control of individual Anti-Aircraft guns, Electron Flux turrets, Fuslon Mortars, Guided Missile stations and Plasma Cannons. In fact, you could spend entire games working the guns and leaving everyone else to get on with the fighting.



- 1 Map centering, map labels and active camera controls
- 2 All the warriors on your team
- 3 Tactical assets, including defensive turrets and vehicles
- 4 Cursor, with easy right-click pop-up command list

← learning slope to climb, Bot Matches are games where your opponents and team-mates are computer-controlled, meaning you can now get a half-decent game without having to dial up and cuss at the lag. However, although the Bots are some of the best we've seen, in that they carry out base maintenance, go flag running and even chat with one another, the online game is still where *Tribes* excels, and you'll be missing out if you stick with a local network setup.

Multiplayer games come in one of eight different flavours, and as such present a lot more variation than many rival titles. Bounty is like vanilla death-matching, although players are given the name of a player whom they must frag, and suffer a penalty if they kill the wrong guy.

INPERSPECTIVE

For team-based action, you can't beat *Counter-Strike*. It also remains more accessible than *Tribes 2*, as does *TFC* and *Unreal*. *Team Arena* is a disappointment.

Counter-Strike

Unreal Tournament

Tribes 2

Team Fortress Classic

Quake III: Team Arena

Capture and Hold sees teams capturing a set number of objectives, and points awarded depending on how long they can keep them. The new verbal taunts, similar to those in *Quake III: Team Arena* and *Unreal*

“The online game is still where *Tribes* excels, and you'll be missing out if you stick with a local network setup”

Tournament, along with real-time voice chat, add to the frenetic nature of this particular variation.

Capture The Flag is the age-old game of stealing the enemy's flag while protecting your own, and remains as popular a variation as ever. Deathmatch is as you'd expect, with everyone out for themselves. Hunter is the bastard son of Deathmatch and Capture The Flag where dead players drop flags which must then be picked up and ferried back to base. Team Hunters is a minor variation on this, where warriors are organised into teams. In Rabbit, one player carries the flag and gets more points the longer he can hold on to it, and Siege sees one team defending a switch deep inside a fortress. Once the switch is flicked, the game ends and the teams swap places.

In summing up, *Tribes 2* is a vat of undiluted fun for team players and organised clans. Add an integrated browser and email, designed to aid communication

between clan members, and it's hard to see why anyone after co-operative action would go elsewhere for their fix. The only downside is that it remains a little too focused on team tactics, meaning newcomers and habitual

deathmatchers will feel wholly out of sorts. You need to know that your cohorts are looking out for you, and when they leap out of bombers before reaching the target, or climb a mountain to marvel at the view, you do get a little disheartened. Lack of co-ordination is the bane of many an online game, and in *Tribes 2* it can ruin the whole experience. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PIII-400
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
12Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Double the memory and at least a PIII-500

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS A visual treat • New guns, grenades and vehicles • Strategy rich
DOWNERS Still a few bugs • Needs team co-ordination to work

87 The most rewarding team-focused action game? Almost

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REPORT

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We tell you how

BEYOND
New design

for the PC generation

NEW!

EROTICA ISLAND

★ £24.99 • Flare Media Limited • Out now

Pornographer-in-chief Steve Hill gets his end away

PCZONE PANTS Amidst the tedium of last year's European Computer Trade Show, one display provided a major talking point, mainly due to its exploitation of virtually naked women. Nothing new there, but the extraordinary show of flesh was at least relevant to the 'product' which has now arrived in the form of this piece of tat.

Essentially an X-rated version of ancient titillate 'em up, *Leisure Suit Larry*, *Erotica Island* opens with Reggie Rich being felled on his private yacht. For reasons of plot development he then crash-lands his chopper on the titular island, where he has to perform a sexual act with every female resident before he can make good his escape. Said coupling is presented in cartoon form à la *Lula's [un]Sexy Empire* and is

reward for solving rudimentary adventure puzzles.

Hilariously billing itself as 'non-PC for the PC,' the game succeeds in breaching every bastion of decency, as Reggie tears through a sex shop assistant, a lap dancer, a cleaner and an array of similarly large-eyed, large-breasted, suggestively-named beauties. It might sound passable on paper (if you're 13), but the game is rendered virtually unplayable by an arcane interface, lengthy pauses in the action and repetition of dialogue to rival Eric Idle in *Discworld* in the frustration stakes.

We'd even go as far as to say the game is bugged, as despite days of perusing the game's single-figure locations, we still haven't managed to convince the croupier to perform a lesbian act with a prostitute while Reggie circles for an orifice. Damn.



Hmmm, what do we have here then?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 16Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** That's it, baby **WE SAY** Runs poorly on just about any type of machine

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Comes with emergency tissue pack
DOWNERS Sexist • Homophobic • Appalling interface • Bugged

10 Worse than Canvey Island



This prostitute's boudoir is caked with all sorts of human secretions.

That's Sarah Swallows. Oh, how we laughed.

THE SIMS HOUSE PARTY

★ £19.99 • EA • Out now

He might have loved it when it came out but, for Mark Hill, the Sims joke is wearing thin

We doubt any of you hardcore readers have anything but the utmost contempt for the whole *Sims* phenomenon. After all, no matter how much Maxis try to hide it, it's little more than a virtual Barbie and Ken game, and all these add-ons with their new

clothes and new doll-house furniture just emphasise that fact.

On first glance, it would appear that the main contribution of this expansion pack is to give you the option of 'Throwing a Party' when you use the phone, at which point all your neighbours

will turn up without a single bottle of wine between them and ready to piss on your new carpet.

Alright, so the whole point is to improve the social aspect of the game, but it's not as if you can feed your guests cocaine and hire a cheap hooker to set up an Annabel Chong challenge upstairs. You'd at least expect to make all your sims friendly

enough with each other to start up a mass orgy in the garden. But no. Having a rave here means buying a DJ table and a flashing dance floor, getting a visit from a bloody annoying mime artist and, if you're feeling really risqué, setting up a Beastie Boys dance cage (minus the topless vixens).

To be honest, who can be arsed designing houses and

making those dumb dolls go to the toilet any more? The fascination wore off long ago. It's a bit cheeky to expect people to pay out £20 when there is so much stuff you can download from fansites and, in this age of mods, the one we really need is an FPS where you can mow down a whole sim household with an AK-47.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P300 with 64Mb RAM and 8Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS You can have parties • Easier to make lots of friends and get better jobs
DOWNERS No new career paths • Still bloody innocuous

50 Mostly harmless

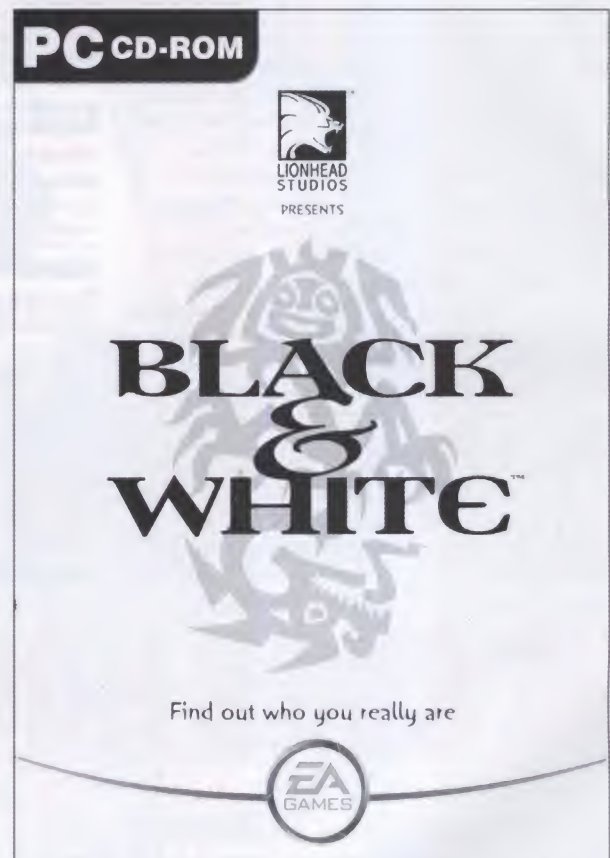
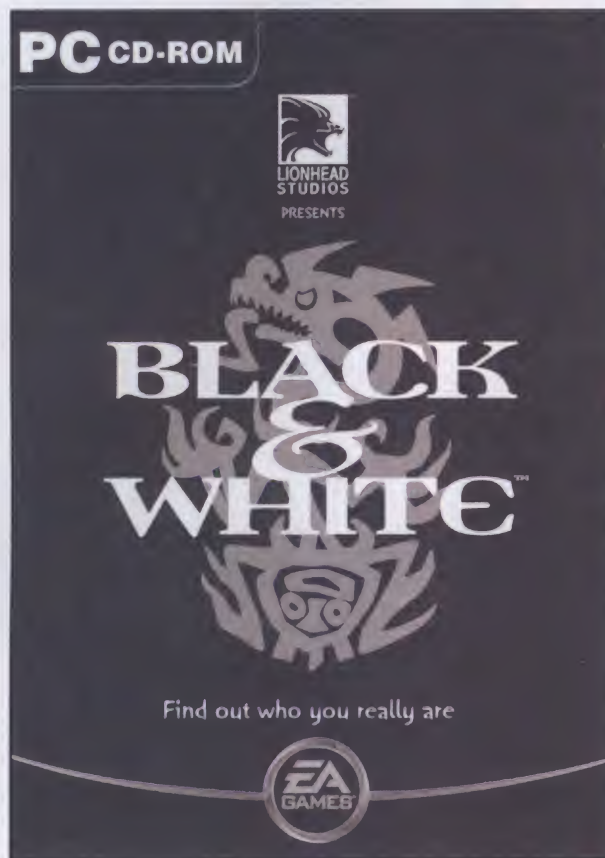


You can ask the mime artist to leave but there's no option to shoot him.



The DJ music is definitely an improvement on the original's radio drivel.

NOT EVERYTHING IN LIFE IS BLACK AND WHITE



Eden. The perfect world. A lush, unspoiled paradise of small islands
in a cobalt sea. Eight tribes live their lives here in harmony.
They work the land, fish the sea, build homes and farm animals.
They only want for one thing. A god.



THAMES RACER

★ Davilex • £19.99 • Out now

Man in a boat: Steve Hill

PC ZONE completists may remember a cheap and cheerless game called *M25 Racer*. You may even have bought it, although it certainly wouldn't have been on our recommendation, as it received a deserved kicking. Undeterred, Dutch publishers Davilex are back, only this time the action takes place on water.

As the (clearly regionalised) name hints, the murky waters of the River Thames feature, although the game is as much about Amsterdam and Venice – more obvious choices considering both are riddled with canals. In comparison, London suffers as a venue, a fact borne out by the tiresome non-event that is the

Oxford vs Cambridge boat race. Lipping buffoons with big arms are nowhere to be seen here though, and the boats are also a good deal more sophisticated, they're capable of firing torpedoes and homing rockets, laying mines and even leaping into the air at will.

Decent boat games are practically non-existent, as it's

difficult enough for the human mind to comprehend the vagaries of water in its liquid form, let alone recreate it in the virtual arena. This is no more than a passable effort, although it does at least look vaguely like water, albeit slightly angular.

The racing itself is average, and relies mainly on strategic use of

the turbo power-ups, the explosive weaponry often proving too powerful to be used in a confined space. Races rapidly become spread out, and it can therefore be a fairly lonesome experience, and not one that we would suggest paying good money for. On the plus side, it's an improvement on *M25 Racer*. Well done, best work yet.



Race through the condom-filled canals of Amsterdam.



Venice. Can you believe they built it on a lake?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200
Memory 32MB **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D
card **WE SAY** P400, 128Mb RAM,
16Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS It works • Easy to play
DOWNERS Unbalanced gameplay •
Mainly dull

48

Don't get in the boat

HIRED TEAM TRIAL GOLD

★ £24.99 • Koch Distribution • Out now

A contender for the multiplayer shoot 'em up crown – is it here at last? You must be joking, says Mark Hill

It was bound to happen sooner or later. After the massive success of *Unreal Tournament* and *Quake III*, there were always going to be some below-average imitators. Although most developers have been intelligent enough to see that this particular market is far too competitive to hope to nudge the two giants off their perch at the moment, Russian developer New Media Generation has decided to have a go anyway.

The comparisons with *Unreal Tournament* are not redundant – this really is the most blatant attempt to cash in on Epic's success. The problem is that it doesn't use the *Unreal* engine, the weapons are crap and the AI isn't really up to much either. The look of *Hired Team* sticks closely to the medieval/industrial tone adopted

by *Unreal* but is completely lacking in detail, textures or smoothness. Try playing *Unreal* without a 3D card to get a similar effect.

To make matters worse, the weapons make the ones in *Nerf Blast Arena* sound authentic. The term peashooter immediately springs to mind as soon as you start firing your pistol, and things don't get much better from there. The machine gun fires peas at a fast rate and the rocket launcher, a slightly larger variety of leguminous plant pods – a broad bean perhaps. It really is that pathetic. As for the characters in the game, they are an impressively thick bunch. It doesn't matter whether they're on your side or not, they never feel as though they're worth

shooting. They skip, hop and jerk like puppets on a string around the dull levels. Apparently, the game has already sold more than a million copies in Germany. They obviously haven't heard that *Unreal Tournament* is out on budget. Fools.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P233
Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
3D card **WE SAY** PII 300 and a 16Mb
3D card

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS There is a similarity to
Unreal Tournament
DOWNERS Rubbish engine • Rubbish
weapons • Rubbish AI • Levels are
rubbish as well

20 Guilty



Nice shoes, man.



Multiplayer comes with CTF, deathmatch, assault and domination modes.

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX 2000

★ £24.99 • Eidos • Out Now

A GP game with a winning formula? Martin Korda was left disappointed, again

Far too many F1 games are aimed purely at the simulation market. Of course some of them are more anal than others, while some do try to combine simulation and arcade elements into one package – EA's *F1 Championship: Season 2000* springs instantly to mind. However, not a single one has attempted to cater for the arcade lover, until now.

F1 World Grand Prix 2000 is somewhat of a mixed bag. Your first reaction is likely to be one of horror, as you come face to face with the blocky, fuzzy and badly rendered graphics. But things do improve somewhat from this rather inauspicious start.

You're presented with a choice of two options: Arcade or Grand Prix. The first is a straightforward

mindless racing mode, which proves to be more fun than you might imagine. The action is fast and furious with breaks virtually unnecessary. The soundtrack is top notch and adds excitement to proceedings. Even though there are three difficulty levels to test yourself against, it's still highly unlikely you'll spend more than the odd half hour playing this way.

The second option is geared towards simulation fans, although it's still heavily influenced by

arcade elements, especially when it comes to your car's handling. Before you can join a team and try your hand at a full season, you have to pass your Super Licence Test, which is fun for about two minutes, annoying for about 20 and then, unless you're a rubbish driver, done and dusted. It does go some way to teaching you the subtleties of F1 driving, but it's hardly the best tutorial we've seen. And racing in this mode, is no more than passable.

If you fancy a nice easy F1 racer then there's plenty of fun to be had with *F1 World Grand Prix 2000*. However, if you're the anal retentive type who loves tweaking rear wings and gear ratios, then choose one of the myriad of other F1 sim based games instead.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P266
Memory 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** PII 300 and a 12Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

- ↑ **UPPERS** Arcade and simulation modes • Great sound and music • Instantly playable
- ↓ **DOWNERS** Lacks staying power • Poor graphics and presentation • Too easy

57 A fun but ultimately mindless racer



This car's desperately in need of a re-spray.



You can play from several different viewpoints.

STUNT GP

★ £24.99 • EON Digital Entertainment • Out now

Steve Hill performs some cunning stunts. Ha ha ha ha ha...

The gaming industry is going to hell in a hand-basket and people wonder why. Could it have something to do with the large number of mediocre games being thrown at an unsuspecting public? Oh look, here's one now, from Team 17 of all people, a rare non-

Worms-based release from a developer that has spent the last five years squeezing every inch of flesh out of its only vaguely original idea. The inventor of that game never needs to work



Off-road shenanigans ahoy.

again, while those behind *Stunt GP* might be advised to consider a career change.

Battery-powered buggies racing over a series of looping tracks with credits awarded for performing stunts. Said credits can then be used between races to purchase upgrades for your buggy. Battery power diminishes during each race – more so when using turbo – and has to be recharged via a pit stop. So far, so what? Except... nobody is

going to risk race position by performing a barrel roll in the midst of a close encounter, and the stunts are largely performed by accident, providing an annoying distraction. The design of the tracks is such that you spend much of the time in the air, or in a ridiculous loop, during which time control is wrested away from you.

Chuck in a stunt course that attempts – and fails – to be a four-wheeled *Tony Hawk's* and you've got the complete package. Mediocrity in a box.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233Mhz Memory 64Mb RAM
ALSO REQUIRES 8Mb video card
WE SAY PII 350, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb video card

PCZVERDICT

- ↑ **UPPERS** Crisp graphics • No thought required
- ↓ **DOWNERS** Annoying gameplay • Too much air • Loop nonsense • Dull

34 Generally poor



Small cars, dull game.



Where are the damn worms when you need them?

man, machine and modem in perfect harmony



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ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES www.pczone.co.uk #3 JUNE 2001



BETATEST PREVIEW

ANARCHY ONLINE

The future of online role-playing games

REVIEWED – HEAD TO HEAD

UNREAL TOURNAMENT VS QUAKE III ARENA

18 months on, we ask who's the (grand) daddy?

REVIEWED

ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD DAWN

Can the old dog learn new tricks?



REVIEWED

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS

We take CDV's epic for an online battle



PLUS! LASER SQUAD: NEMESIS • COUNTER-STRIKE •
C&C: RENEGADE • FIREARMS • INFILTRATION • Q3 JAILBREAK

MEETING PEOPLE ISN'T EASY



Time was, when computer games came on cassette tape and their instructions fitted neatly on the inlay, even an idiot like myself could get a game to work. There were no hard drives to make space on, no complicated drivers to install and few keyboard controls to worry about. On PC, learning to play a game, even getting it to work, can be a time-consuming and hair-pulling task.

Unfortunately online games are even worse. Add to the above the problems of finding, downloading and installing patches, latency and the added cost of phone use and subscription-based play. I'm very much into online gaming, but even I'm bewildered by the popularity of games like *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest*. I played *UO* for a month and it was hard work and not much fun. What online gaming needs is something more subtle, a massively multiplayer game where you are up and running straight away.

Which is why I think Westwood's *Earth And Beyond* and Verant's *Star Wars Galaxies* are the most important games to keep an eye on. Both are from popular developers and aims to bring in new blood, new online players. If *UO* is the multiplayer equivalent of *Baldur's Gate*, it doesn't matter how good the game is, there are many who wouldn't even unsheathe a bargepole to touch it. Give them the online equivalent of *Deus Ex* though and they might be tempted. A massively multiplayer game needn't have to be a role-playing game, especially one so hardcore as most are. Similarly an RPG needn't be one where you have to spend hours weighing up the merits of adding one point to your constitution rather than your dexterity.

Online gaming is hardcore enough. It doesn't make things any easier when the games themselves are even more so. All I'm saying is can we have something a little easier? Please?

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

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Counter-Strike with goblins and stuff.

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Four years on, is the sun setting on Origin's online adventure?

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We find out if *The Age Of Kings* is well and truly over.

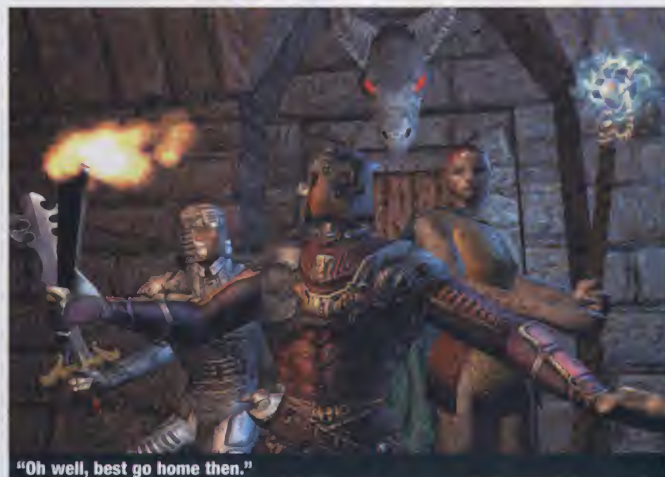
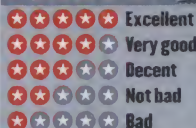
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The latest and greatest FPS add-ons reviewed and rated.

HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main PC ZONE reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT



"Oh well, best go home then."

ULTIMA ONLINE 2 CANNED

Origin Studios retreat and regroup

The game formerly known as *Ultima Online 2* has been canned (*Ultima Worlds Online: Origin* was always a bit of a mouthful, so it's perhaps just as well). With *Ultima Online: Third Dawn* (reviewed on p94) just out, the fear was that *UO2* would be competing with, rather than complementing, the four-year-old *Ultima Online*. The press release read: 'We've decided to put those (*UO2*) resources into growing and improving the core offering for *Ultima Online*'s 230,000 loyal subscribers. In the near future and with the release of *Ultima Online: Third Dawn*, players will see new lands, new creatures and a world that is continually evolving within *Ultima Online*.' Eighty-five Origin employees were laid off and went to a field to drink themselves into oblivion,

one of whom, Origin founder Richard Garriott, was dishing out T-shirts emblazoned with the words 'Origin. We created worlds, 1983 - 2001'.

Although still ticking over, Origin is now but a shadow of its former self, having been one of the first PC game developers, and creator of such genre-defining classics as *Wing Commander*, *Crusader*, *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock* and of course the long-running *Ultima* Series and its countless spin-offs.

Commenting on the cuts, Garriott lamented the passing and hinted that with 85 of his old chums now free from the Electronic Arts collective, his return to PC game development could come sooner rather than later. A cause for celebration indeed.

DOTCOM, GOING GONE

More game sites heading for a crash

With Barrysworld (www.barrysworld.com) undergoing radical surgery after its near-fatal wounding back in February, we hear of more dotcom casualties as both Freeloader (www.freeloader.com) and Gameloft (www.gameloft.co.uk) have gone tits up, bloodied by lack of advertising revenue.

Freeloader, launched last summer, offered full versions of games for download free of charge. At the time of writing the Freeloader site was still running. So too was Gameloft, also launched last summer, a community-based news site backed by French publisher Ubi Soft.

And things are due to get worse before they get better, with rumours that Gameplay (www.gameplay.com), one-time mail-order specialists, are looking to sell off parts of the company. Recently Gameplay sold off its development studio interest and it looks like other areas such as the troubled Wireplay service could soon find itself in the bargain bin.

Still, lovely weather we've been having.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

How Westwood hopes to take on *Counter-Strike*

Westwood recently jetted over to show us the latest code of C&C: *Renegade*, its first action game to be based on the GDI Vs Nod battles of the *Command & Conquer* universe.

Still six months from release (and a year late), the game has changed significantly since we first clapped eyes on it back in September 1999. No longer a pure third-person shooter, a first-person view has been added. The promising single-player campaign that would have allowed us to drive and pilot all the vehicles and aircraft from C&C has had to be scaled down to just the vehicles – though you will be able to call in air strikes and watch Orcas convey their best wishes to Nod units below.

Though in the single-player game you control Havoc, a GDI commando, in the multiplayer game you can choose to join either side in the conflict. All 20 weapons (many with dual-fire modes) will be available, plus all the vehicles, including Harvesters, Nod Trikes, Humvees and Tanks.

Up to 32 players will be able to fight it out across vanilla deathmatch arenas, Team Deathmatch

levels, Capture The Flag and a new multiplayer variation called C&C Mode.

"We've been playing a lot of *Counter-Strike*," says *Renegade* producer Mike Bell. "It's a great game by talented guys, but rather than copying it, C&C Mode will stay true to the *Command & Conquer* universe."

In C&C Mode both teams start with a ready-made base with Harvesters sent to sniff out Tiberium and bring it back to the Refinery. The aim is simply to destroy the enemy base, either building by building, or nuking the whole lot in one spectacular orange glow.

"The more Tiberium you harvest, the more money you earn," says Mike. "So you have to protect your side's Harvesters, make sure your Refinery is kept in working order and ensure you have enough power to run it. If money is short you may have to resort to stealing enemy vehicles and when you die you may only be able to get back into the game as a cheap soldier."



Like *Team Fortress*, *Renegade's* C&C Mode will feature a wealth of player classes.

Soldiers will range from Riflemen and Snipers, to Minigunners and rocket troops, and like its RTS cousin

Renegade will allow players to help out as Medics, Engineers and Spies, infiltrate enemy bases and even steal wads of cash.

"We haven't decided on whether one player will be able to act as a team leader," Says Mike. "But we hope to make *Renegade* highly modifiable. Hopefully third-party developers will use the tools we release and come up with a few good mods, skins and other add-ons. We'll also be supporting the game with regular downloads."

Whatever the single-player game ends up like, the multiplayer side sounds like it's going to be a sure-fire winner. For more information, check out www.westwood.com.



LASER SQUAD: NEMESIS

X-Com precursor returns

It gets knocked down. It gets up again. Mythos Games that is, creator of the *X-Com* series, *Magic & Mayhem* and up until a couple of months ago, developer of *Dreamland Chronicles* (the best turn-based strategy game there never was). Now having set up a new company, CoDo games (www.codogames.com), the UK-based team (www.mythosgames.com) has announced *Laser Squad: Nemesis*, an online remake of its own Spectrum classic *Laser Squad*, itself borne out of *Rebelstar* and later to become *X-Com*.

Ⓢ If *Laser Squad* does use the *Dreamland* engine... ooh, lovely.

Similar in scope to Hasbro's *Email X-Com*, *Laser Squad* will allow two players to pick from three factions (marines, aliens and droids), spending force points on a spread of units and battling over a series of maps, each player taking turns simultaneously.

Julian Gollop, Head of Mythos/CoDo explains: "Each faction has five distinct unit types, some with special abilities. For example, the aliens have a 'queen' breeder unit that can lay eggs depending on consumption of enemy corpses. The droids have a scanner unit for detecting organic brainwaves through solid walls and the marines have medic units for battlefield surgery."

Although Mythos is hoping to crank the game out fairly quickly, there are still a number of issues that need addressing. We fired off a few questions

to try and find out if *Nemesis* might use the *Dreamland* 3D engine, or more importantly if Corporal Jonlan would make an appearance in the game, but at the time of writing no one had got back to us. Whatever.



Corporal Jonlan or David Baddiel? You decide.

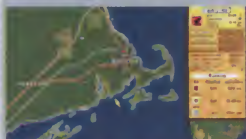
LINKS

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT



Mythic Entertainment is due to embark on the third round of beta testing for *Dark Age Of Camelot*. The game, which is focused on the clan warfare that breaks out after the death of King Arthur, looks like it could be one of the best online role-playing games of the year, even if it may prove a little too hardcore for some tastes. Sign up at www.darkageofcamelot.com/beta/application.html.

RAILS ACROSS AMERICA



With Microsoft's *Train Simulator* close to release, developer Flying Lab has decided the time is right to announce its online take on *Railroad Tycoon*. *RAILS ACROSS AMERICA* will allow eight players to go against each other in a bid to run the best rail network across North America, rather than make the most money. No release date has been announced but you can keep an eye on the timetable by visiting www.flyinglab.com/rails. Just don't be surprised if the sequel turns up first.

A TALE IN THE DESERT



Set in ancient Egypt *A Tale In The Desert* is an online RPG featuring all the usual character creation, skills and quests, but without any killing. Yes you heard that right, no swords, no spells, not even a poke in the eye. What there will be, however, is plenty of politics, legal wrangling, discussion and back-stabbing. Check out <http://ataleinthedesert.com> for more information.

TEAM FACTOR



Czech developers seem to have the sole rights on tactical action games at the moment, with *Hidden & Dangerous* and its sequel, it's a trend we hope will continue with *Team Factor*, a team-based online shooter in development at 7fx. The website has been relaunched and a massive update is expected shortly. Czech – sorry – it all out at www.7fx.com.

LEGENDS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

It's Counter-Strike – in tights

First released in 1987, the *Might & Magic* series has since branched out from its original role-playing roots to incorporate turn-based strategy (*Heroes Of Might & Magic*), third-person adventure (*Crusaders Of Might & Magic*) and now, with next month's release *Legends Of Might & Magic*, fast-paced first-person action.

Originally touted as a fantasy version of *Unreal Tournament* when we reported on the game last year, *Legends* has since transformed into a troll-infested take on *Counter-Strike*, with up to 16 players fighting either for the good or evil side across rich fantasy maps set in dank dungeons, castles and forests.

Where the *Counter-Strike* influence becomes clear is in the choice and variety of game modes. Instead of whining hostages, here the good team must rescue the Princess from the evil dungeon and take her back to base. Escort The Warlord tasks you with shepherding said Warlord from one side of the map to the other, while the other team try to fillet the poor lad.

Other game modes too have been given a fantasy makeover: rather than having to capture a flag,

Legends Of Might & Magic offers *Sword And The Stone*, where both teams fight to retrieve a sword (from a stone, apparently) and escort the hefty blade to a central area. And, like CS, when you are killed you are out of the round until the next one starts, leaving you to fly around and watch the action.

Unlike CS, *Legends Of M&M* allows players to choose, as well as being good or evil, from three distinct classes, a hand-to-hand specialist (Paladin/Warrior), a magician (Sorceress/Heretic), or jack-of-all-trades mixture of the two (Druid/Archer). Each victory earns you money, from which you can buy armour (which can slow you down), better weapons and even runes or power-ups that can give you a temporary boost of speed, invisibility or flying ability.

We've been playing a two-level demo of the game for a while now and even though the LithTech engine (last seen in *No One Lives Forever*) provides a typical fantasy setting, the animation is a little stilted and the emphasis is on ranged attack, with throwing axes, rapid-fire crossbows and magic staves, it does seem a little out of sorts.

That said, we were playing those same two levels for four hours straight, so there must be something to look forward to.

Find out more from www.3do.com/mightandmagic/legends



Yeah, but he's real ugly.



Each map will have its fair share of wandering monsters.



It just wouldn't be a *Might & Magic* game without a dragon.



Might & Magic's answer to the Railgun.



Bots will fill in if any players drop out.



"Hello Princess, fancy coming back to my castle?"



And this is the bit you watch.

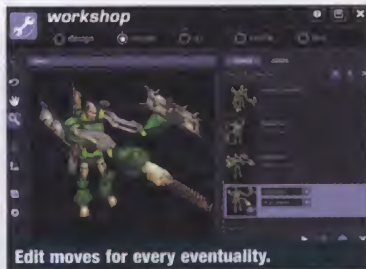
ROBOFORGE

Gladiators, are you ready?

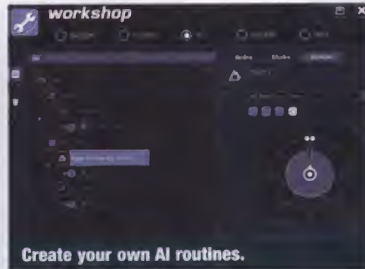
Due for release next month is the intriguing *Roboforge* (www.roboforge.net), a 3D combat game where you design a droid from various components, wire up its brain and then send it into an online arena to hopefully rip the arms off other user-created robots. Like some futuristic boxing manager you don't control the robots directly, rather you clip them together from basic parts (joints, limbs, sensors, shielding, energy and so on), then you customise the robots AI. You can even add textures of your own.



Craig Charles, where are you?



Edit moves for every eventuality.



Create your own AI routines.



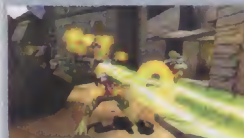
Trust us, they're robots.

The fights themselves are simply played out, either by downloading them or by streaming the footage direct to your screen. Each bout will last three minutes, with the aim being that your robot causes more damage than it receives, with the winner picking over the scraps.

The developers eventually hope to set up cash prize tournaments, so you could, if you desire, build a stable of robot warriors, put them into different competitions and win thousands of dollars – not that we wish to get your hopes up in any way.

LINKS

FAKK MULTIPLAYER



An unofficial multiplayer beta patch has been released for Ritual Entertainment's tits-and-ass *Quake III*-powered third-person action adventure *Heavy Metal: FAKK 2*. If you can be bothered, you can find the file at <http://fakk2.moonwind.org>.

RUNE ADD-ON



Out now in the US is *The Halls Of Valhalla*, a multiplayer-only add-on for Take 2's recent action adventure *Rune*. It features 15 new characters, 33 new maps and two multiplayer game modes; Arena and Headball. Thankfully, owning a copy of the original game isn't a requirement to play the new multiplayer modes as *Valhalla* will work all by itself. Its release date is set for the end of May. www.runegame.com has the details.

HOSTILE SPACE



Think *Elite* meets *SubSpace* – where you can fly, trade and fight your way across a 2D top-down universe – and you'll be pretty much near *Hostile Space* territory. Except there's little trading to be done, so unlike *Elite* then, anyway...

For a graphically undemanding game though, there seems to be plenty of action to be had and certainly more in the way of teamwork needed with factions to side with and a slice of role-playing thrown in too. Get a beta version from www.interadventure.com.

FLOODGATE OPENS



Ex-Looking Glass designer Paul Neurath, having worked on the likes of *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* before the acclaimed codeshop went under, has resurfaced with Floodgate Entertainment and decided to devote his time to creating an online game. What, when and how we don't know, but with such a catalogue of classics behind him, Floodgate could be a developer to watch out for in the coming months.

NIMESIS ONLINE

Yes! even the small ones

Beta testing is soon to start on *Nimesis Online*, a futuristic multiplayer RPG from little known developer Tanhauser Gate.

As is the case with *EverQuest*, *Nimesis* will be playable via subscription, but the game code is available for download free of charge. Additionally there will be a subscription-free trial version of the game separate from the main game.

Set on Earth, in a fair few years time, *Nimesis* is played out in small self-contained zones, each organised by server. Also what may set it apart is the action-focused gameplay, with plenty of sci-fi weaponry, missions and player organisations.

A release date has yet to be announced, but you can sign up for beta testing at www.nimesisonline.com.



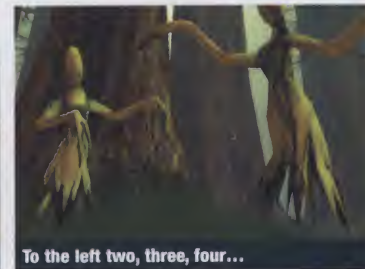
Weird, isn't it?



Who said smoking banana skins was bad?



Earth, but not as we know it.



To the left two, three, four...

Never mind the bollocks it's ANARCHY ONLINE

Online role-playing in a world without goblins. Sounds too good to be true? **Chris Anderson** takes a detailed look at the first futuristic online RPG and comes away suitably impressed

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Funcom
PUBLISHER Funcom
WEBSITE <http://www.anarchy-online.com>
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- ★ The first futuristic online RPG, it represents a major step forward for the genre.
- ★ Futuristic vehicles are promised after the game is released.
- ★ Seamless transition from one zone (game area) to the next.
- ★ The best grouping system seen in any online RPG so far.

It had to happen. There's only so much fun to be had from chasing endless hordes of goblins around the place, and while *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest* are both unquestionably great games in their own right, the time is ripe for a new breed of online RPGs to enter the fray. *Anarchy Online* will be the first futuristic online RPG, and we have had the luxury of joining the beta test to see how things are shaping up.

The premise for the game is thankfully a simple one: enter the game world and choose sides in the

conflict between Omni-Tek (a futuristic superpower), the Clans (rebels fighting against the dominance of aforementioned superpower) or Neutrals (those still

developer Funcom estimates that it will take four years before there is an ultimate winner in the conflict between the warring factions. It's an intriguing prospect: thousands of people playing together online in an epic battle for supremacy of the game world. The only potential spanner in the works is the possibility of a large amount of players opting for the same side, which would surely unbalance the entire war and lead to a situation where it will always be obvious which side will win when the storyline reaches its conclusion. We see the balancing of each faction against the others as Funcom's biggest challenge, but from what we've seen of the beta test so far, players seem to be lining up equally on both sides.

AIN'T NO REVOLUTION

In terms of gameplay, *AO* is not exactly revolutionary. It has been hailed by many as a futuristic version of *EverQuest* and with a few notable exceptions this is not too far from the truth. Kill enemies to gain experience points, gain enough points and you will go up a level (everyone starts at level 1), die and you will lose experience, which sets you back

game (Doctor, Soldier, Trader and so on) but how you distribute points into their skills is what determines the type of character they become.

Concentrate on melee skills if you want to get up close and personal, concentrate on magic skills if you like standing at the back casting spells while everyone else gets beaten up (*AO* uses nano crystals as its equivalent to conventional spells). In this respect it's not entirely dissimilar to *Ultima Online*, but *Anarchy Online* has a much better interface, which shows you clearly how you are developing your character and the effects of how you 'tweak' your character are a lot more noticeable in battle. Generally speaking, *Anarchy Online*'s user interface is a lot friendlier than both *Ultima Online*'s and *EverQuest*'s. This will make them a lot of friends when the game finally goes live. It's still too early at this stage to predict how players will take to *Anarchy Online*, but we can tell you it's looking very good indeed so far. Watch future issues of *PC ZONE* for updates on the game and a full review when it's released later in the year.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

While playing the beta test has certainly shown us the huge potential of *Anarchy Online*, we had many questions as to how Funcom is shaping its game up to take on the competition. Tommy Strand, the producer of *Anarchy Online*, is the man with the answers.

“With an extended social system of clans and factions we hope that people will be more involved at the higher levels”

TOMMY STRAND, PRODUCER ANARCHY ONLINE

undecided as to which side of the conflict they will side with). In this respect *Anarchy Online* is markedly different to both *UO* and *EQ*, both of which simply place the player in the game and encourage them to kill things in order to gain levels and earn money and items.

This is the first online RPG with an interactive storyline, and

a little. It's all been done before in *EverQuest*, but it has to be said that *AO*'s open-ended approach to how players customise their characters is a breath of fresh air. There are set character types in the



Tommy Strand
producer of
Anarchy Online.

PCZONE: What is the single biggest reason you think gamers should play *Anarchy Online* as opposed to *EverQuest* or *Ultima Online*?
Tommy Strand: Since we had the luxury of playing both

Someone is in desperate need of a pedicure.



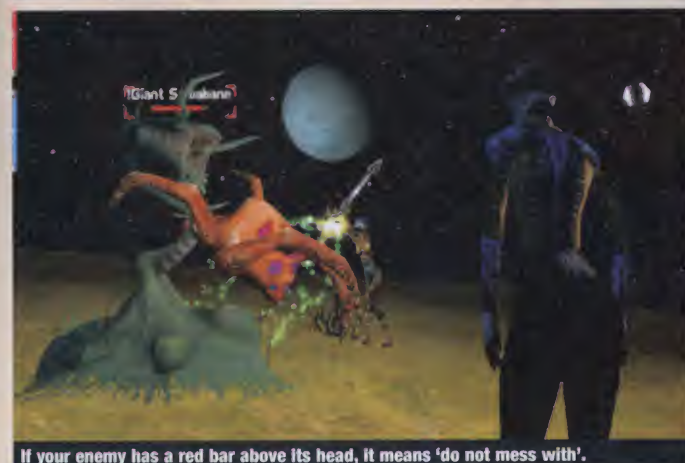
Spectacular visuals, and it will look even better upon release.



EverQuest meets Blade Runner? Well, sort of...



Close combat is particularly convincing in Anarchy Online.



If your enemy has a red bar above its head, it means 'do not mess with'.

of them during the development of AO, a lot of the things you want from the games are included in AO. The character development is level based, with the focus on profession, similar to the class development in EQ, but you have more freedom with your skills and the power to change your profession like in UO.

A majority of the gameplay revolves around the traditional hunt-loot-sell-rest cycle people are used to in EQ, but we have jazzed it up a notch and lowered the downtime. We have also solved the problem of over-camped spawn spots using a system we refer to as Auto-Content. The Auto-Content system generates individualised missions with unique areas for each player. This totally eliminates the downtime required to find something to do. If you are

interested in gaining cash, items and experience with moderate difficulty for your level you go to the Mission Assignment Terminals and get a job. Once you have completed the job you get your reward. To summarise, the answer as to what the single biggest reason is, I would have to say the Auto-Content system.

PCZ: What is the highest level you can reach in the game, and how do you propose to sustain people's interest during their journey to a higher level?

Strand: Right now the current level cap is 200. It takes insane amounts of experience to level at high level, but the beasts and areas you have access to will be worth it. Sustaining people's interest is something that requires monitoring. We have no way of knowing how people will behave on higher levels.

All together now

WANNA BE IN MY GANG?

In *Anarchy Online* operating in a group works

While *Anarchy Online* can be played more or less alone, and you can fight without help from other players (this is called solo-ing), it's a much better idea to group with other people. When grouped with others, everyone attacks the same target and experience gained from the battle is distributed evenly among the members of the group. *EverQuest* also uses this grouping system, but penalises people who group by lowering the amount of 'personal' experience players gain when killing something while grouped.

Anarchy Online awards high experience points to players when grouped, and you can gain levels

quickly while grouped with other people. Because of this, players in *Anarchy Online* actively seek out others to group with (many players in *EverQuest* choose to fight alone because it takes so long to gain experience in groups).

This is great news for *Anarchy Online*. A game environment that rewards players for grouping with others as opposed to penalising them is something online gamers have been crying out for since online RPGs began. If Funcom can somehow find a way to encourage players to communicate more than they do at present, *Anarchy Online* will have the most group-friendly environment in any online game.



It was love at first sight or at least something vaguely similar.

Two-fingered salute ? x

STOP, YOU'RE KILLING ME

Emotes are here to stay and we're not best pleased

In an attempt to bring a 'human' element to the game, *Anarchy Online* gives players the ability to trigger animations, which convey to other people how they are feeling at the time. Type a command or trigger a hotkey and other players will see you wave, dance, look happy or sad and so on. We don't like this. *EverQuest* has a similar system (these are called emotes and are intended to convey your emotions) and they are open to all sorts of abuse. You can fully expect misguided Americans to walk right up to you and trigger a series of emotes that they will consider highly amusing. They are, of course, wrong. We don't know yet if Funcom is including a two-fingered salute as an emote, but if they haven't already, they should. We'll be using this emote a lot.



We have tested the game on high level, but people are unpredictable. We have made the system so that the gameplay mechanisms are easily adapted to the player's behaviour, and easy monitoring and tweaks are possible. With an extended social system of clans, departments and factions we hope that people will choose to be more involved



Landscapes and terrain are impressive and varied.

politically and storywise at the higher levels.

PCZ: Will there be vehicles in the game?

Strand: Vehicle questions are probably on the top ten list of what people want from a game that takes place in the future. There's something about having your own shiny vehicle and moving along at insane speeds. We have promised vehicles after launch, and it is marked as a scheduled update.

PC ZONE: From what we've seen of the beta test, people don't seem to talk to each other much. How do you propose to build a sense of community?

Strand: We decided early on not to include playfield wide chat channels. This was after experiencing the effect that this had in *EQ*. We do however want people

“When the game ends in four years there will be a ‘winner’. We have still not written the end, but we do of course have our own preferences”

TOMMY STRAND, PRODUCER ANARCHY ONLINE

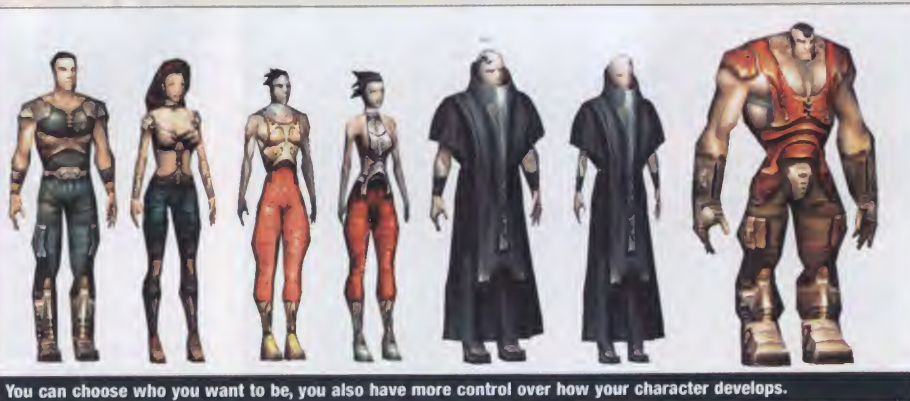
to talk together, so we changed our chat system pretty late in development to a more rugged system that supports a wider range of chat functionality. We now have the option of dynamically changing the type of groups the players have access to and the players can mute and log on to different channels.

To mention some of the channels available to the player, we have organisation, team, vicinity and custom group. We have created a chat interface that's more like an instant messenger with the online status of the recipients in your friend's view and offline messages. I believe that when we reach critical

mass people will start chatting more. One of the most appealing reasons to play MMORPG's is the fact that you are playing in an environment where there are real people. The social gameplay and the chat system are both put in place to cater for this fact.

PCZ: Do you still intend to run the game on just one server when it goes live?

Strand: It seems that it is a necessary evil to split the world. Even though we can handle the load and the content, we are most likely incapable of handling the crowding it will have around certain city areas. Because of this we've chosen





Use these teleporters to get to distant places quickly.



Nano crystals are AO's equivalent to spells. Buy them here.



A unique system allows you to customise your character.



The scenery is stunning in places. Here's an example.



Look, straight out of Star Wars, well nearly.

to split the world into what we call dimensions that are still part of the same storyline. People only exist in a single dimension but will be capable of moving between them. Some gameplay related caps and restrictions might apply on some of the dimensions to control the migration of players.

PCZ: Will you be including an in-game help feature to get new players started?

Strand: We are including a more newbie-friendly area where the players start. There you will have

easy access to the core gameplay functions of the game as well as easy to follow instructions.

We have learned from the beta period which gameplay concepts are the biggest problems for the players to grasp and have changed the UI and areas accordingly. The CoR (Counsellors or Rubi-Ka) team will also have a division of what UO called newbie greeters. These will be strategically placed around the world to help integrate new players and to help them find their way in the huge cities and the vast wastelands of Rubi-Ka.

PCZ: Can you foresee a situation where there will be an ultimate winner between Omni-Tek and the Clans? What do you propose to do if that happens?

Strand: When the game ends in four years there will be a 'winner'. We have still not written the end of the story, but we do, of course, have our own preferences. It is up to the players and the story-writers to determine what is victory and who will be the ultimate winners. **PCZ**



A spell in action. Yesterday.

Here you go

SEARCH ENGINE

It's still a little early for the AO online community to get to grips with such a big game, but AO fan and Info sites are already starting to spring up all over the place. Here are a few of the best so far

<http://www.anarchy-online.com/>

This is the official website and, as you can imagine, you will find more information here than on any of the other sites. Background information on the conflict and detailed information on player characters and classes can be found here.

<http://aostratics.com>

The stratics network is well known for its excellent game sites and we expect aostratics will be no exception when AO goes live. A wealth of information on the game and its professions along with the most extensive collection of in-game screenshots are to be found at this site.

<http://aovault.ign.com>

Another great site for all things AO. Every aspect of the game is covered on this site (to a basic degree at this stage, obviously) but as players get to grips with the game we expect this to be one of the places they will visit to report their findings. Bookmark it.

<http://www.aoforge.com>

This site contains much of the information freely available on the other sites listed here, but in particular has detailed information on the areas you can visit in the AO gameworld (this is text information, there are no graphic maps of the AO cities and wasteland as yet).



Unreal Tournament: at just under a tenner this is great value online or off.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT VERSUS QUAKE III ARENA

★ Unreal Tournament V436 • £9.99 (£19.99 inc. *Unreal* + *Unreal Mission Pack*) • Out now • www.unrealtournament.com
 ★ Quake III Arena V1.27h • £29.99 • Out now • www.quake3arena.com

Richie Shoemaker takes time out from *Counter-Strike* to put the two old fighters back in the deathmatch ring, and asks, after 18 months, can they still put up a good fight?

The plan was a simple one. With the game now consuming more electricity than a cliffhanger episode of *EastEnders*, the idea was to review *Black & White* online. That fell through however, thanks in part to the fact that I

was having far too much fun getting hopelessly lost in the single-player game, having no joy registering the game to even take my misbehaving ape online. Instead, I thought we could have some fun pitting two of the planet's most popular online shooters against each

other, games that though getting on a bit, still manage to rack up an ominous amount of gaming hours the world over. Treat this as a mini-Supertest if you wish, a second bout between two heavyweight giants of the gaming world. Ladies and gentlemen we bring

you *Quake III Arena* versus *Unreal Tournament*, in the brown and not-so-brown corners respectively. Again.

GET IT ON, BANG A GUN

We made no bones about the fact that, although bloodied in the ring, *Unreal Tournament* came off the better the first time these behemoths slugged it out. And even though *Quake III* seemed to sell a few more copies, you seemed to agree,

voting *UT* Game Of The Year at last year's Reader Awards. Looking back it was easy to see why: out of the box, *UT*'s wealth of single and multiplayer options put *Quake III* to shame, the bots were more human and the weapons more balanced. In contrast *Quake III* was little more than a *Quake II* upgrade – and there are a handful of people in the room behind me who even consider it worse. But *Quake III Arena* was and



Quake III Arena: on its own it's an acquired taste, but worth it for some of the excellent mods available.

still is darn fast. So fast, that after half an hour's play eyeball juices are no longer contained and motion sickness will waft through the steeliest of stomachs. More than any other bit of code, *Quake III*'s engine is built for extreme speed and consequently the game that bears its name is the one that requires the reflexes of a panther. That said, its speed is really *Quake III*'s only joker in the pack. If it wasn't for its established brand, one that ranks it as the chief money-earner among pro gamers, it probably wouldn't be as popular as it is today (evidence of which being that most *Quake III* players are damn good to the point that if you were to pick up a copy today and play online, you'd get beaten black and blue and might never play again). *Unreal Tournament* is simply more fun, whatever your level.

MODS THAT ROCK US

Leaving aside id's own add-on *Team Arena*, for which a cool £20 is asked, *Quake*'s saving grace is the mods that are

available for it. In the *ZONE* office it has been said we no longer play either *Unreal* or *Quake III Arena*, but *Quake* remains installed for one reason only – the fabulous *Jailbreak* mod (and occasionally the odd bout of *Rocket Arena*).

Where *UT*'s real-world mods – *Strike Force*, *Urban Ops* and *Infiltration* – easily beat off *Quake III*'s equivalents, *Quake* wins out with its original batch of far more outlandish third-

GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY

In the graphics department, time has certainly been kinder to *Quake III* than it has to *Unreal*, but both more than hold their own 18 months after their release. If you were new to first-person online gaming however, we'd still choose *UT* above *QIII*; it's cheaper, has more to offer and those who regularly play it are more varied in skill, meaning players of any level can get a good game in.

“At the end of the day if we had our naked balls under the shadow of a mallet, we'd go for *Unreal* again”

party add-ons. You could even argue that *Quake III Fortress*, to some degree 'real world', is perhaps the finest variation on *Team Fortress* to date – well, I think so.

Mods, for us at least, are what have kept both games alive for so long – as is indeed the case with *Half-Life* and the often applauded *Counter-Strike*. Without mods, both games would be nowhere near as popular as they are today.

Quake III on the other hand is the hardcore player's choice, whose subtle differences only become evident after weeks of play. It's the game you would graduate to, aim for even, and one you want to play to win rather than just take part in.

So which is the best? Simple. Neither. Unlike single-player gaming, the best game is often the most popular and that game is *Half-Life*, specifically *Counter-Strike*. But

you knew that already and I'll wager most of you reading this have all three games in various states of use regardless. But I'd be interested to know what you think. I personally feel that on their own, played straight out of their oversized boxes, all three games are immense fun online. *Unreal Tournament* for me is the expansive tutorial – a five-minute blast, played in my case offline for its bots rather than on. *Quake III* is the game that when I play and lose (more often than not these days), I become far more depressed. The stakes are higher and the skills required more specialised.

As it was when we first reviewed them, there's little to choose between the two. Both do the same thing, one better in some areas than the other, but at the end of the day if we had our naked balls under the shadow of a mallet, we'd go for *Unreal* again. Though the price gap has widened, *Quake* wins out with the range of mods available, all of which – for *UT* too – are free to download.

But if you don't agree with us and prefer to go with the masses, figures would suggest *Quake III* is the better game. Typically, there are around 2,000 *Quake III Arena* servers available to play on at any one time, compared with just 1,500 for *Unreal Tournament*. Asking which one is the daddy then becomes obvious. With over 20,000 servers it's *Half-Life*. The other two in comparison are just bickering children. But what fun they are to play with. [X]

PCZVERDICT

QUAKE III ARENA

UPPERS Bloody nippy • Off-the-wall mods

DOWNERS Not nearly enough variation



The deathmatch king

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

UPPERS Plenty of variation • Accessible throughout

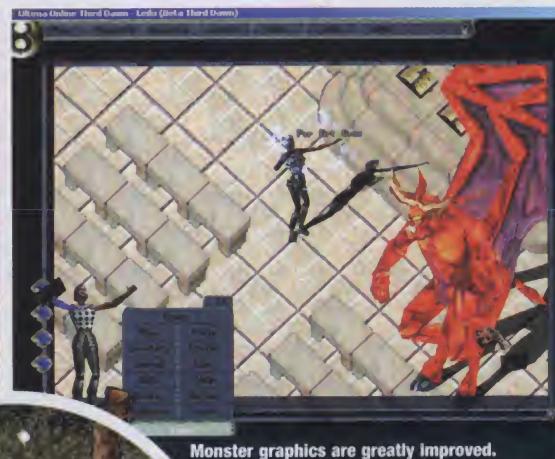
DOWNERS Easily mastered



The best all-rounder



Look, lots of cash. Grab it while nobody's looking.



Monster graphics are greatly improved.



Spell effects are a lot more impressive, if not exactly mind-blowing.



The new creature models are impressive.



New lighting effects enhance UO's atmosphere.



No animals were harmed during the making of this game.

ULTIMA ONLINE: THIRD DAWN

★ £34.99 (plus £9.99 per month, first month is free) • EA • Out now

It's *Ultima Online* in 3D, claims Origin. No it's not, says **Chris Anderson**

The prospect of *Ultima Online* in 3D, it has to be said, initially gave me the feeling I would be leaving *EverQuest* and *Anarchy Online* behind and returning to the only online RPG with any degree of depth.

Say what you like about *UO* – condemn it for the juveniles who regularly run around killing people and stealing all their possessions (er, I've done it myself), laugh at its archaic in-game chat system or even write it off as just another goblin game, but the fact remains it's miles ahead of the competition in terms of game design and game mechanics.

Despite this, droves of the *UO* faithful have left and moved on to *EverQuest*. The reason for

this is simply because *UO* now not only plays like yesterday's news, it looks like it too.

Big things were promised for *Third Dawn*, the game that would hopefully revive *UO*'s flagging fortunes. In particular, the move to a 3D game engine was touted as taking *UO* several steps up the technology ladder. In truth, the graphics have been given quite an overhaul, and player characters, enemies and buildings and so on look much more detailed. Spell effects are also a lot more impressive and new player and monster animations make the game feel slicker, but ultimately (no pun intended), it's still the same game wearing a new graphical hat. Even the addition of a whole new land to explore (Ilshenar is

a fairly high level land that primarily features player versus monster combat) does not lift *UO* entirely out of the doldrums, and it certainly doesn't put it 'up there' with your *EverQuests* and *Anarchy Online*s, or even *Asheron's Call* for that matter.

END OF AN ERA

This is all a bit ironic in the light of EA pulling the plug on what would have been *Ultima Online 2*. *UO2*, from what we've seen, featured a 'true' 3D environment not entirely dissimilar to the one used in *Ultima Ascension*, and could

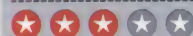
well have heralded the end of *Ultima Online* as we know it. Let's face it, who's going to play a top-down RPG when you can play what's more or less the same game in full 3D? As it stands, *Ultima Online* devotees must be wondering where the series goes from here. If *Third Dawn* is as technologically advanced as the series is ever going to be, there seems little reason for them to hang around when there are better online RPGs in existence, and many more already in development. Don't get me wrong, *UO* is a great game, but there are better

ones around and if you're new to online RPGs and fancy trying your hand at one of them, you would be much better off taking a look at *EverQuest* or waiting until *Anarchy Online* arrives later this year. **EW**

VERDICT

UPPERS New 3D engine with improved graphics • A new land to explore with new monsters and items • An RPG with considerable depth

DOWNERS Character graphics look dodgy • Looks dated compared to the competition • It's essentially the same game with a graphics overhaul



Good, but not good enough

“New animations make the game feel slicker, but ultimately it's still the same game wearing a new graphical hat”

COSSACKS

★ £34.99 • CDV • Out Now • www.cossacks.com

Rhianna Pratchett heads online in order to scratch her *Cossacks* itch

Cossacks appears to be the surprise hit of the year so far. Storming into the Charts at number one last month, it's only just been knocked off the top position by *Black & White*. Deservedly so as well, and it's refreshing to see a little-known title flying off the shelves.

Cossacks in single-player mode contains some particularly tricky scenario missions and has an unpleasant habit of trying to wipe you off the screen within five minutes. However, it is in the multiplayer game that it truly comes alive.

Much of this has to do with the symbiotic relationship between your economy and

the military, a concept so fundamental to warfare it's amazing it hasn't been explored to this extent before. The way you run your economy has a direct relation as to how strong your military will become and how well they perform in battle. For example, you will need a

mean you'll often be fighting against a deeply entrenched enemy and will need a lot of artillery power to even get past the walls.

GOING FOR GOLD

If you decide to rely on mercenaries, which are produced very quickly from the diplomatic centre, you will need to take control of as many gold mines as possible to maintain

“Rush tactics look set to be just as popular in *Cossacks* as they have become in *Age Of Kings*”

good supply of coal and iron before advancing on an enemy or your artillery will not be able to shoot and will be cut down all too swiftly. This is especially important online because the durability of the resources

them. If you run out of gold at a crucial moment all, and I mean all, your mercenaries will rebel against you, which involves either attacking your empire, leaving to join the enemy (if they have more gold) or just standing

still. The whole battle can change within a few seconds.

Rush tactics look set to be just as popular in *Cossacks* as they have become in *Age Of Kings*. Pikemen or the equivalent civ units are the first choice for the dedicated rusher, because they only need iron and food to be produced in vast numbers. The only real defence against this is to build cheap palisade walls as fast as possible. In fact, the 'pike rush' looks set to be the equivalent of the ever popular tower/archer rush in *Age Of Kings*.

DEFEND, DEFEND, DEFEND

Cossacks also has its own stats monitoring. So if you choose to decide your game by time and score, you'll find that the scoring system is more biased towards those who defend rather than attack, and for a war game it seems slightly odd that it doesn't actually encourage you to go to war. Hence, the biggest scorers are often those who build an impenetrable fortress and sit there creating hundreds of soldiers while waving two

fingers up at you.

During the initial testing stages the developers of *Cossacks* had battles that lasted up to three days, which is a good indication of the sheer longevity of the gameplay. Currently the game can be played via a LAN, a TCP/IP address and by downloading the free trial software for Gamespy's *Cossacks* room, at www.gamespy.com. Historical RTS games are not everyone's cup of tea, especially with the speed and scale of *Cossacks*. But if you've been bored to death with the likes of the *Age Of Empires* franchise, *Cossacks* might just be your salvation. [A-]

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS Fast paced • Large number of units available • Unique link between the military and economy
- DOWNERS Can't play co-operatively • Computer scoring leans more towards defence than attack



Very time consuming



Going in for the kill Dragoon style.



Establish a strong, well defended base as soon as possible.



Cossacks: the green, green grass of home.



Sich Cossacks are good for exploring, they're also mad.



If you use mercenaries, make sure you line their pockets.

COMING SOON

ROCKET ARENA



The latest version of the fabulous *Rocket Arena* mod for *Quake III* has just been released, offering five new maps and support for Mac players. Head on over to www.planetquake.com/arena for the latest files.

THE BEGINNING



Who is the G-Man? Where exactly is Xen? If you've been asking yourself these questions, maybe you should be taking a look at *Half-Life: The Beginning*, a new mod that aims to tell the *Half-Life* story from the beginning – hence the name. Up to 12 weapons are planned, plus new characters and objects, a full single-player campaign, plus new multiplayer modes. Beta 2 of the multiplayer-only function can be found at www.hltb.co.uk

WESTERN Q3

Beta 2 of *Western Q3* is almost upon us, a mod that spices up the *Quake III Arena* engine with refried beans and cold coffee. New features planned include new maps, bank robbery mode, new skins plus a rather deadly Gatling gun. Ride along to www.planetquake.com/westernq3 for the latest.

QUAKE III FORTRESS



The *Q3F* team has been busy skinning up for the Beta 2 release of *Quake III Fortress*, offering a glimpse of the new models that have been created for the popular *Quake III* team-focused mod. If you've yet to sample the delights of *Quake III Fortress*, pootle along to www.q3f.com and give it a try – you won't be disappointed.

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb gets minted with the latest freebie add-ons



A great range of weaponry that has been lovingly replicated.



Firearms greatest fault is its occasionally 'flat' feel.

FIREARMS V2.5

★ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • Out now from www.firearmsmod.com



Firearms is a great class-based mod that takes ideas familiar to *Team Fortress* and *Counter-Strike* players, adds a few tweaks of its own and then creates a fighting situation that lies somewhere between the two.

Parachuting into the game (yes, really) you choose a side to fight for and then decide whether to use one of the pre-configured classes, or if you wish, select your own level of armour and weaponry. This makes it easy for unfamiliar players to see the pros and cons of being a lightly armed but fast moving soldier, as opposed to a much

more heavily armed class laden down with armour. The weapons are true-to-life examples of the best firearms around – AK-47, M16, M60, Barrett sniper rifle and many more.

There are plenty of good ideas: you have a fitness meter that goes down as you exert yourself, which can be offset by choosing to increase your agility at the start of the game (one of a selection of skills including leadership, marksmanship or even the ability to call in artillery strikes!). You can even tie bandages around your wounds to slow blood loss, which, while not healing you, may allow you to live long enough to

survive the round. Even better are the maps, which feature minefields, guard towers and machine gun nests.

These features alone make *Firearms* stand out from the rest and it's even a worthy arch-rival to the ever-popular *Counter-Strike*. Great stuff.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Familiar formula • Original ideas
DOWNERS Steep learning curve • Needs more support



More hardcore than *Counter-Strike*

SILVER FORCES BETA 2B

★ Requires full version of *Soldier Of Fortune* • Out now from www.planetsoldier.com/silverforces



Silver Forces aims to bring *SOF* into the wildly popular world of *Counter-Strike* and *Team Fortress* – and not a moment too soon either. Although hampered by graphics that aren't in the same league as other titles, *SOF* is a fine FPS game in its own right but its lack of easily configurable bots is still a bug-bear.

Silver Forces is limited in what it offers so far, but if you have access to a LAN then it is well worth a try. Scenarios like the hostage rescue and bomb defusal maps will be familiar to *Counter-Strike* aficionados who have been blessed with these avenues of fun for some time now, while the Football game

seems more in line with the wackier side of the mod scene. There's also an upcoming bank-robbing element, but we don't know too much about it yet. *Silver Forces* is worth keeping a watch on, but don't expect to be dumping *Counter-Strike* just yet.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Much-loved formula
DOWNERS Dated graphics • Very little online support • No bots



A competent version of a well-worn formula



It wouldn't be fun without a bomb.



Silver Forces has a shiny submarine.

COUNTER-STRIKE V1.1

★ Requires full version of *Half-life* or *Counter-Strike* • Out now from www.counter-strike.net

ON THE CO From humble beginnings as just another *Half-Life* mod, through several vague beta releases and then onto god-like status somewhere around version 7.1, *Counter-Strike* has become the most popular online shooter so far. Having at last 'gone commercial' with the release of version 1.0, it's now a superbly engrossing blend of stealth, subterfuge and sheer white-knuckled panic that's so infuriatingly good we just can't leave it alone.

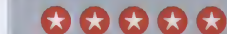
Version 1.1 brings another round of improvements, upgrades and tweaks to give our poor adrenaline-overloaded hearts even more cause for concern. So what has been changed? Well, with a mod already as good as *CS*, nothing too

radical was needed, so it was more a case of polishing the paintwork and slapping a bit of body-filler over one or two little cracks. The best place to find out about all of the changes is the official website (above), but here's a taster: new maps, upgraded existing maps, cheats zapped, enhanced player models, spectator mode and more.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** It's *Counter-Strike*—need we say any more?

↓ **DOWNERS** Other games won't get a look-in



There can be only one



Counter-Strike 1.1 is still the daddy.



Adrenalin-pumping, close-quarter action.



Infiltration runs on original UT maps.



Hitting any target is difficult.

INFILTRATION 2.85 + MAP PACK

★ Requires full version of *Unreal Tournament* • Out now from www.planetunreal.com/infiltration

ON THE CO Once upon a time, the *Infiltration* team must have played über-shooter *Counter-Strike* and thought: "Hey, we can improve on this." The result is another take on the popular military-squad deathmatch, but *Infiltration* takes the idea a step closer to the real world in its interpretation of the genre.

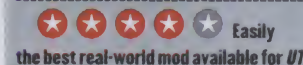
There is an almost slavish adherence to the idea of realism. The guns sound like the real thing, recoil like the real thing (and then some) and aiming is also quite novel—just try to hit a moving target when you're firing from the hip.

The maps are all good, with a nice mix of sneaking about and all-out blasting required. There are some installation niggles so make sure you read the manual.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Proven formula • Cool maps • Very realistic

↓ **DOWNERS** Maps have to be installed separately • Installation gremlins



Easily the best real-world mod available for UT

Q3 JAILBREAK V1.27

★ Requires full version of *Quake III Arena* • Out now from <http://q3jb.teamreaction.com>

ON THE CO Jailbreak is a classic *Quake III* mod. It's all about teamplay as you try to escape from prison, but if you fail to keep an eye open for the rest of your squad you'll definitely lose.

Each game starts with the two teams happily trying to frag each other. Sooner or later you will get killed and you'll respawn in the enemy teams' jail. It is then up to the rest of your team to try and rescue you by hitting a switch to open the prison doors. If you aren't alone in jail however, a bit of co-operation with your fellow prisoners might get you to an escape hole that you can use to get out (and then release your compatriots, of course).

Jailbreak uses the standard *Quake III* weapons and power-ups to ensure a frantic and frag-filled game that is absolutely chock-full of action. The maps are superb—well detailed, well designed and well nice to look at. This is an essential for anyone's *Quake III* library.

PCZVERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Fab maps • Simple yet hugely addictive

↓ **DOWNERS** Can get repetitive • Single objective



One of the best *Quake III* mods around



Jailbreak maps carry a 'Quakey' feel.



Jailbreak is all about escaping from jail.

COMING SOON

THE AFTERMATH



ON THE CO The problem in the past with *C&C* mods is that they screwed up your installation files. Not so with *Red Alert 2: The Aftermath*, a mod for Westwood's popular RTS that turns the skirmish game up to full and adds a few new units for you to play around with. Version 2 of the mod can be found at www.cncgames.com/mod_ra2aftermath.shtml.

FBI



Back in the days when mods were more commonly referred to as total conversions, there was a little game called *Quake* doing the rounds. Some people actually still play it and for them there's the latest version of *FBI*, a mod that combines several gameplay styles from many different mods, from *CS*-style terrorist and bomb disarm maps to curious slo-mo *Matrix* game modes. Check out www.quakemods.net/fbi for more.

GOLDENEYE



Version 1.9 of the *GoldenEye* mod for *Half-Life* has just been released, offering improved bot support and a new multiplayer mode called The Man With The Golden Gun—at the expense of three old game modes. Based on the N64 game, the mod features a number of levels modelled on Rare's 1997 hit.

You wanna step on Shoemaker, hack down Woods or slaughter Korda? Well, now's your chance

It was the moment the gaming world had been waiting for, the night of the first PC ZONE Readers' Challenge. Matched up against plucky clan Fletch at *Counter-Strike*, it was a best-of-five contest.

The first map, Militia was a nail-biter, which we just shaded 2-1. Capitalising on this great start we went on to win Siege 4-0, followed by a narrow victory on Assault 2K. Italy and Dust were slightly more one-sided, with us winning both, 6-2 and 5-0 respectively. In order to even out our Ping advantage, we allowed Fletch an extra player in Assault 2K and two extras in Dust, but it simply wasn't to be their night. However, the Fletch boys put up a great fight,

and had us seriously worried several times. Exceptional performances of the evening came from Jimlad, Ripper, Dr Gonzo and Bert, who proved to be particularly lethal shots. Many thanks to Clan Fletch for their great sportsmanship. Also, thanks to everyone who's sent us a challenge. We've been blown away by the response, and we're still wading through the emails. If you haven't heard from us yet, don't lose hope, you never know when the call may come.

THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET

Pick one of the games and send your challenge to us at letters@pczone.co.uk (with **PC ZONE Readers' Challenge** in the subject heading). *Counter-Strike; Quake III (Arena, Rocket Arena or Jailbreak); Unreal Tournament; Half-Life; Virtual Pool 3; Age Of Empires II: Age Of Kings (four-a-side); C&C Red Alert 2 (four-a-side); PGA Championship Golf 2000.*

We need your clan details (website, name), two daytime phone numbers and two email addresses, so we can contact you. Only send us a challenge if you're sure you'll be able to get a team together on the given date (the next challenge will be Monday, May 21). Also, make sure you all have access to a machine that

APRIL 30



6.30 – 8.30pm

PC ZONE vs Clan CZR – Counter-Strike

9:00 – 11:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

Unreal Tournament/Counter-Strike



allows you to play the chosen game online.

**TO THE VICTOR
GO THE SPOILS**

If you win, without a hint of cheating, we'll give your clan between four and six (depending on team size) Razer Boomslang 2000 mice, worth £69.99 each.

Probably the best gaming mouse, it'll give you an edge no matter what game you're playing.



PC ZONE Free-For-All

GETTING CONNECTED

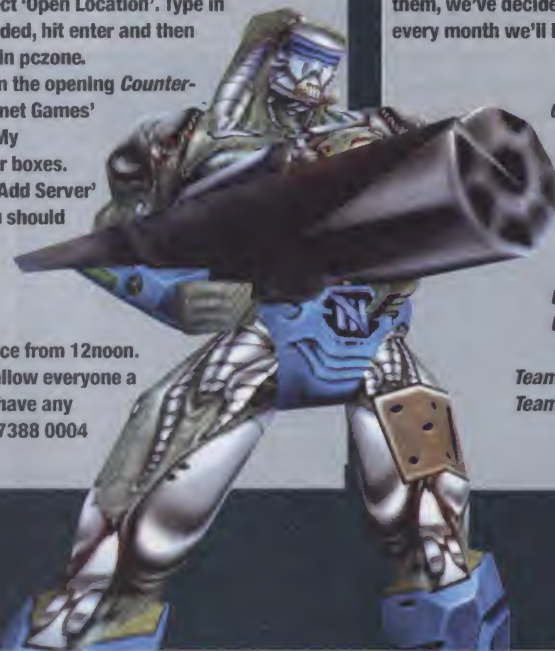
Get ready for some hot fragging action

Not in the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the free-for-all. To join our *Unreal Tournament* server, click the 'Multiplayer' tab in the top-left menu and then select 'Open Location'. Type in '195.149.48.59:7777' in the box provided, hit enter and then when prompted for a password, type in pczone.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click 'Play CS' then 'Internet Games' and 'Filter'. Check the box for 'Are In My Favourites List' and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click 'Filter' again, and click 'Add Server' then type: '195.149.48.59:27016'. You should now see a server called 'PC Zone Challenge' listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is pczone.

Servers will be available for practice from 12noon. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.



HAVE A GO

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net



The **PC ZONE** game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only **PC ZONE** readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27968

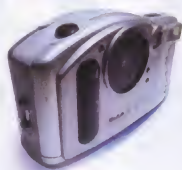
Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 – 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 - 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: Hartson

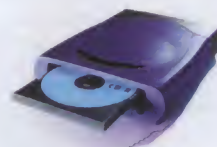
20,000 products



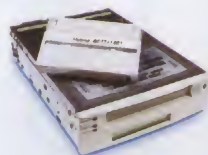
3,000 reviews



bags of expert advice



all the latest prices



one amazing web site

www.computershopper.co.uk

The only site you'll ever need for buying computer products

personal computers • notebook computers • printers • scanners • digital cameras • modems • CD and DVD drives • monitors • handheld computers • reference software
programming software • accessories • utilities • education • internet • games • 3D, animation & video software • web graphics software • video and photo capture
PDAs • software • graphics software • spreadsheets • illustration software • presentation graphics • audio software • business software • office suites
word processors • databases • personal finance software • speech recognition software • personal information software • project management software
networking • hard disks • tape drives • desktop publishing software • graphics cards • email • operating systems • components • sound cards • web tools • security

BUDGET ZONE

Bit short this month are we? Well don't worry, because this lot are just a tenner each

★ BARGAIN HUNTER: Martin Korda (*Baldur's Gate* by Rhianna Pratchett)

MESSIAH

★ White Label • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

While it hardly turned out to be the saviour of the games industry when it originally hit the shelves, *Messiah* did manage to turn most

people's heads by trying to be a little different. Rather than sticking to the boundaries imposed by any one genre, *Messiah* boasts elements of a third-person shooter, stealth game and an action/adventure.

You play Bob, a pint-sized nappy-wearing cherub, who has been sent by God to clean up a world of corruption and sleaze. By possessing the bodies of humans, you have to solve puzzles and complete quests in order to help Earth become a better place – how nice. However, this is made incredibly difficult by the fact that just about everyone you come across is intent on kicking the shit out of you, so it's just lucky you're wearing that nappy really. *Messiah* is challenging, varied and open-ended, so if you're blessed with a spare tenner, you know what to do with it.

BEST
BUY

PCZ VERDICT

81%



"Is it just me, or is it really warm in here?"



"Well, hello there."



It's beardy and weirdy...



...but it's still a great game.

BALDUR'S GATE

★ White Label • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

Time to get your grubby little mitts on one of the classic RPGs of all time at a bargain price. Although somewhat overshadowed by its sequel *Shadows Of Amn*, *Baldur's Gate* is still a hugely absorbing game based on the Forgotten Realms world. Don't let any preconceptions about its potential beardy weirdness factor put you off. Everything that used to be handled with piles of

paper is taken care of by the computer, so you won't need any dice or a spotty GM to run the proceedings. At this price you can buy lots of copies and give them away as birthday presents, stocking-fillers... Hell, give them out to small children you meet in the streets. They'll thank you for it one day.

PCZ VERDICT

80%



Should I be enjoying this?



Radiation can really get to you.

FALLOUT/FALLOUT 2 COMPILATION PACK

★ White Label • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE
AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE

It's a tribute to any game to still be sitting proudly in our Top 100 more than two years after its initial release – which gives you some idea about just how good *Fallout 2* really is.

This post-apocalyptic RPG comes bundled with the original. They both use the same engine and are incredibly similar in just about every way. However, this is no bad thing, as they're both massively absorbing RPG/adventure games, which are often

genuinely funny despite their morbid storylines. It's definitely not one for the kids though, as it's full of adult content. If you can put up with the now archaic-looking graphics, you'll find a real RPG classic lurking underneath. Pound for pound you'd be hard pressed to find many RPG packages better than this, even if you tried really hard.

PCZ VERDICT

81%

WILD WILD WEST: THE STEEL ASSASSIN

Focus • £9.99 • Out now

There's always one isn't there? A crap game in Budget Zone that is. Bringing down the cheapskate's neighbourhood this month is *Wild Wild West: The Steel Assassin*, another rubbish game from a big movie, which was also a load of old arse.

Picking up where the film left off, you get to play both the main characters from the film in this action/adventure, solving

puzzles and shooting some bad guys as you go. Animation is poor, AI is worse and the puzzles make the other two look good. Paying £10 for this is an insult. Most of you will find it about as gripping as the film, and that fact alone should speak for itself.

PCZVERDICT

25%



Rubbish film....



...rubbish game.

STARFLEET COMMAND: NEUTRAL ZONE

White Label • £9.99 • Out now

If you read our *Star Trek* Supertest, way back in issue 97, you'll remember that we had a bit of trouble trying to describe exactly what kind of game *Starfleet Command* is. Between us we finally managed to describe it as a third-person space combat game on acid, featuring turn-based/real-time combat. Oh dear.

Another, more simplistic way of looking at it is simply to call it an

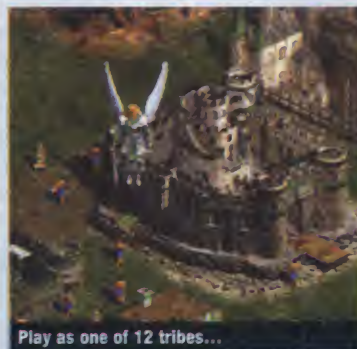
action/strategy game, best played from an isometric or top-down viewpoint. Missions are primarily combat-based, and while there's no storyline to keep you entertained, its replayability factor and excellent multiplayer options make it fiendishly addictive.

PCZVERDICT

76%



Look no further, an eagle.



Play as one of 12 tribes...



...against the evil Fryhtans.

SEVEN KINGDOMS II: THE FRYHTAN WARS

Focus • £9.99 • Out now

Compared to the likes of *Cossacks* and *Call To Power II*, *Seven Kingdoms II* is a bit of an RTS stinker. It looks pretty good from the microscopic screenshots on the box, but once you get it up and running on your 21-incher (don't be childish), it looks pretty dreadful.

I'm afraid it doesn't play too well either, with micro-management seemingly being its primary selling point. Most of you who like this sort of thing will probably find that you already own

a dozen similar titles which are a damned sight better than this one.

As one of 12 human tribes, you have to defeat a psychotic race called the Fryhtans, whose only point in life seems to be killing you. Hardcore veterans will be challenged to their limits, but if you're a bit more fun-loving when it comes to RTS games, just run away.

PCZVERDICT

58%



Ten points.

CARMAGEDDON II: CARPOCALYPSE NOW

White Label • £9.99 • Out now

From the first day it appeared, *Carmageddon II* was a massive hit. Teenagers the world over ran out of their homes, fake IDs in hand, to try to buy one of the most controversial games ever. With its unsubtle blend of high-speed racing and mindless, indiscriminate violence, it shot to international fame for all the wrong reasons, becoming a virtual representation of all things anarchic and an outlet for an angst-ridden and repressed generation.

Of course none of these snotty-nosed would-be anarchists could either afford it or get hold of a copy, so everyone over the age of 18 got to play it instead, most of whom just enjoyed it for the mindless and entertaining racer that it is. And now you can get it for next to nothing. You still have to be 18 though, sorry.

PCZVERDICT

73%

FEEDBACK

Feedback from feedback, admissions, apologies and reconciliations.

Martin Korda tries his hardest to make sense of your babblings

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last three months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Or you can email them to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Feedback in the subject line

SEVERANCE

REVIEWED *PCZ* #98, Jan 2001
SCORE 87%

What we said

"Delving deep into the game, you eventually hit upon an infectious addiction that's not only surprising, but also admirable."

What you thought

While the physics from *Hitman: Codename 47* are excellent, they pale in comparison to the physics in *Severance*. This game's engine is exquisite. If you throw an object, it doesn't just land and stop, but rolls around for a bit before rocking to a standstill just like in real life. Water reflections are gorgeous and the light sourcing and shadow casting are the best I've ever seen.

I'm not easily fooled by gorgeous graphics, as I firmly believe that gameplay is the most important feature of a game. But when a game has graphics like these, it becomes far more realistic and fun to play.

So on to the gameplay. One particular encounter sticks out for me. An imp shot an arrow at me, which went through my arm and stayed there. So I ran off, pulled

the arrow out, loaded it into my own bow and fired it back at him.

Heads roll, limbs are hacked off and there is no better way to initiate a scrap than by chucking the head of an enemy's best mate at him. I know I'll be keeping a look out for any future *Rebel Act* games. I thought your score was spot-on, as the game does have the odd flaw here and there, just as you illustrated in your review."

LJ Coady

Having played the demo, and disliking the control interface, I didn't hold out much hope for the retail version. However, I found *Severance* to be very good. The graphics are as

the four characters has their own self-contained plot, meaning there are really four different games to play. Providing you can cope with the controls, it's worth persevering with. A note to *Rebel Act*, though – Gamepad Support has to be included in *Severance 2*.

Jon Rose

Comment

Rebel Act has truly surpassed itself with this gorgeous and unbelievably atmospheric action/adventure. What strikes me as ironic is that this is the same game that was dropped by Infogrames back in March last year when it was known as

"There really is no better way to initiate a scrap than by chucking the head of an enemy's best mate at him"

LJ COADY ON SEVERANCE

stunning as your review stated, with the lighting effects being even more impressive. The sound, with or without A3D, is also used well. Playability is spoilt a little by the idiosyncratic control system, which doesn't help when faced with enemies with excellent AI. A bonus is that each of

Blade. We'd been following its progress for several months prior to this, and were shocked that a game of this quality was being ditched by such a renowned publisher. However, we never stopped believing in *Rebel Act*, and our faith was justified when we reviewed the finished product, which proved to be a real corker. It's true that the control system does take a bit of getting used to, but once mastered, the ensuing carnage makes your perseverance more than worthwhile. The physics are spot-on, the graphics are

luscious and the AI, as Jon so rightly points out, is top notch. Roll on *Severance 2*.

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

REVIEWED *PCZ* #101, Apr 2001
SCORE 85%

What we said

"*Undying* is not without its faults, but it remains one of the most unsettling first-person shooters we've ever come across."

What you thought

I'm scared, genuinely scared. OK *Half-Life* had its moments. I jumped a few times, but with *Undying*, I nearly had to change my pants. I've just been playing it for the last three hours on my lowly PC, and it's without doubt the scariest game I've ever played. No other game has ever given me goose bumps down the back of my neck, until now. I'm scared to go into the next room.

I've seen it running at 1024x768 on my brother's machine with a GeForce Ultra graphics card, and it's convinced me that it's time to upgrade my machine. The graphics are simply stunning. Thanks again for another honest review.

Martin Ferris

Looking back over the few FPSs that have come and gone (or come and stayed) over the last few months, I must admit that your scoring system has been pretty much spot-on. However, looking at the 'Downers' comments in your review of



Severance: hideously gory, but incredibly good.



Robbie Fowler winds up another Guardian reader.

Undying, I find that only one is valid – too many loading times. Fair enough. This should have shaved off about five per cent. When you say “No interaction with environment”, do you mean you can’t push chairs about, open drawers and so on? If so, I think you’re judging *Undying* unfairly. Such features are important in RPGs and adventures, not FPSs. Indeed, not even *Half-Life* allowed you to pull vending machines down on aliens’ heads.

And when you say “insufficient variety of enemies”, that made me laugh. How about skeletons, demons, ghosts, Neanderthals and cultists? When compared to something like *Soldier Of Fortune*, *AvP* or *Project IGI*, it’s pretty varied. I ask you, what variation is there in *Soldier Of Fortune*? Soldier, soldier with a big gun, soldier with an even bigger gun...

You praise *Undying* in your review, but give it a comparatively rubbish mark. According to your scoring system, *Gunman Chronicles* is better than *Undying*. Absolute bollocks. *Undying* should at least be scored at about 90-94 per cent. I’m sure other people would agree with me.

Rapheal Of Brujah

☺ I have to trouble you just one more time. First off, thanks for printing my feedback on *No One Lives Forever* (which I still believe was scored too low) in issue 100.

Since then I have read your review on *Clive Barker’s Undying* and now I have to kneel in the dust – your reviews are back on track with this awesome one.

Reading it I was just going yes... yes... yes... It was absolutely spot-on. *System Shock 2* is still the best, but *Undying* creates the same sense of fear. Like *System Shock 2*, I could hear the monsters all the time, and I never knew when they were going to strike. When they did, I screamed so loudly that my neighbours could probably hear me.

My mother must be wondering why I’ve been calling her so many times in the past weeks, since I normally only call her for Christmas. But between you and me – I was scared.

The game is a mix of *Sleepy Hollow*, *Dracula* and *The Shining*. I thought that the sounds used in *Half-Life* and *System Shock 2* worked extremely well, but the sound in *Undying* is even better.

So, after three years of subscribing to your magazine, I can now say that the only review I haven’t agreed with was *No One Lives Forever* – and I



Undying has proved hugely popular with many of you.

guess I can forgive you once. After all you are the only magazine that uses the whole score chart.

Heine Jensen

Comment

Goosebumps, soiled undercrackers, fear of adjacent rooms and regular whimpering phone calls to mummy are all symptoms brought about by a truly scary game, so it looks as though *Undying* fits the bill perfectly. Heine, I dread to think what your neighbours thought you were up to after hearing your cries of “yes... yes... yes...” followed by bloodcurdling screams, but I’d recommend you avoid wearing any PVC or leather clothing in public for the next month or so. As for you Rapheal, it’s interesting to note your comment that 85 per cent is a “comparatively rubbish mark”. The review made several criticisms of the game that we think are extremely valid. For starters the game is very linear, as you’re pretty much shepherded through the whole thing from start to finish. As you also point out, we stated that there is no interaction with the scenery in *Undying*. Admittedly, *Half-Life* didn’t let you throw vending machines at aliens, but it did let you manipulate your environment

(move crates, smash windows and so on), which meant you had to think about how to get to the next part of the game by yourself, rather than being led to it like some kind of a confused child. If you check our latest Top 100, you’ll see how highly we rate this game, as it’s forced us to re-score a large proportion of the FPS category. If that’s not an indication of how highly we rate it, then we’d like to know what is.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

REVIEWED PCZ #98, Jan 2001
SCORE 82%

What we said

“*Monkey Island* is an enjoyable, professionally created and amiably funny game.”

What you thought

☺ I’ve never seen PCZ print replies to Feedback comments, so I doubt you’ll even read this, let alone print it.

Let me first say: I apologise for overreacting with some of the comments I made in Feedback issue 101. You’re quite right in your review, which was fair and just, and although I still think the mark should have been nearer 84-85 per cent, I ain’t gonna complain no more.

But I still have a couple of points to add. Firstly, *Escape* has a huge lack of puzzles for an

adventure game. Monkey Combat and the Boulder Puzzle are the only original puzzles in the game.

Secondly, it’s no wonder that only two adventures are in the Top 100. You refuse to let any more in. *EFMI* scored 82 per cent, enough to knock out *Messiah* at least. Thirdly, everyone likes monkeys.

Chris ‘The Tingler’ Capel

☺ I think I’ve worked out why *Escape From Monkey Island* is so good. It’s obviously because of the monkeys. Let’s face it, everyone loves monkeys and any game with monkeys surely must be a great game. *Escape From Monkey Island* wouldn’t be nearly as good if it wasn’t for the chimps, which make the game

worthy of your money on their own. The puzzles aren’t all that good, and without the monkeys it wouldn’t be as funny. Monkeys totally rule, and if more games had them, then the games market would be better for it.

Monkey Brain

Comment

After reading your letter Chris, I’ve come to the conclusion that you’re an incredibly considerate kind of bloke. Look at the evidence. After sending in some feedback, you’ve taken the time to write in and apologise for your outburst in issue 101 regarding our review of this game. We forgive you, but don’t let it happen again, or we’ll tell everyone why you’re really called ‘The Tingler’. In regards to your second point, I’d like to reassure you that *EFMI* has now been put in its rightful place in our Top 100. I’m eternally sorry for this oversight, and will be punishing myself accordingly with a hideous act involving a bullwhip, a bottle of bleach and some salt.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to voice my concerns on the over-excited comments sent to us by several of you regarding monkeys, of which Monkey Brain’s is a prime (and the most worrying) example. Monkeys are hairy primates, with overly long arms, who spend their days scratching their arses and eating lice from each other’s heads. They’re not the messiahs of the gaming industry, and while they do add humour to *Escape*, they don’t single-handedly make the game good. In fact, unlike Chris and MB, we thought the puzzles were one of the best parts of the game and that the monkeys were secondary. ☹



Would *Escape From Monkey Island* be as funny without monkeys?



DEUS EX



HITMAN: CODENAME 47



METAL GEAR



PCZ SUPERTEST STEALTH

PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON CLAY

**THIEF II: THE METAL AGE****PROJECT IGI**

A comparatively new genre comes under inspection this month.
PC ZONE steps into the shadows in search of the ultimate stealth title

☛ L to R: Mark Hill looks good in leathers. Paul Presley reviewed *Thief II* (PCZ #88, 82%) and liked *Hitman* (PCZ #98, 85%) so much he chopped all his hair off. Keith Pullin reviewed *Metal Gear Solid* (PCZ #96, 82%). Rhianna Pratchett is just plain sneaky. Richie Shoemaker still stands behind *Project IGI* (PCZ #92, 85%). Chris Anderson hasn't got a clue what's about to hit him

GAMES

It's only when we come to do a *PC ZONE* Supertest that we realise how well supplied (or not) a particular genre is with quality titles. This month's Supertest is blessed with some of the finest games on PC, so choosing a winner was never going to be an easy task. There was much debate before the discussion even began as to how we were going to decide on the criteria for the overall winner of this round-up. It became clear that the title that emerged as the best stealth game here may not necessarily qualify as the best PC game in the Supertest. Given that this genre is relatively new, but has already proved highly popular with many people, we decided stealth was the most important quality under consideration. On that basis, we went in search of a game that required careful planning and an eye for opportunism as opposed to a game that had its foundations in straightforward action. We were looking for, if you will, the ultimate stealth 'em up. After much discussion (and several heated arguments), we finally found it. What are you hanging round here for? Turn the page and all will be revealed.





You don't have to use stealth, but it certainly helps.

DEUS EX



Deus Ex, one of the best games you will ever play.

Keith: I think *Deus Ex* is a great game, but it's not the best stealth game here. When you're in shadows in this game the guards can still see you. With something like *Thief*, when you're in shadows, you really are in shadows and your movements are concealed. You can be literally inches away from the guard's face and he won't see you. In *Deus Ex*, even if you're hidden behind a barrel in a corner in a shady place, they'll still see you. **Rhianna:** They need a little stealth button at the bottom that shows you how much you can be seen, but I suppose in some ways that would be almost cheating. It would make you walk slower and concentrate on your position. **Richie:** In *Deus Ex* you sort of hold back, but not as much as I thought you would have to. It's like *Metal Gear Solid*—you hide from certain things, you don't

walk in certain places, you put your slippers on before you walk across the metal gantry or whatever, but it's not really stealth. You don't get any stealth items to pick up. Or do you? **Keith:** You have stealth camouflage in *Deus Ex*. **Richie:** Well that's just a part of the game, but it's not actually central to what you have to do to win the game. **Chris:** It's not stealthy in the same way the other games are. You don't have to keep track of where the enemy are all the time, and watch where they're walking and see if there's a set pattern. Well, there's a bit of that, just not as much as in the other games here. It's just not that kind of game. Personally I would rather have stealth as an option than be forced into it, which is why I prefer *Deus Ex* over the other titles here.

Paul: Well it depends how you play it. You can use stealth but I didn't play it that way. **Richie:** That's what makes it superb. It has elements from lots of genres thrown in and that's what makes it the best game here in my opinion. **Chris:** It's still the same as all the other games here. It's all about being a secret agent and carrying out missions. You can use stealth if you want, but you don't have to. **Rhianna:** It all depends on your style of gameplay. If you're into first-person shooters you can go in with all guns blazing, or if you're more into *Thief* and like

stealth you can play it that way and still be successful.

Chris: I played *Deus Ex* using stealth for the most part but the point is you don't have to if you don't want to. What I didn't like about some of the games here is they force you to play them exactly the way they were designed to be played. They're very linear and there's only one way to complete the missions. Walk somewhere once where you're not supposed to and you're dead, game over. **Richie:** But that's what these games are all about, that's exactly what we're looking for.

Chris: I have to admit I do question the fun factor in some of these games. It's like 'oh, they've walked over there, I can move now'. Standing in one place for ages studying the map is just not exciting. **Keith:** Well, admittedly if you just stand in one place for the entire game, that would be a bit boring. **Everyone:** (laughs) **Chris:** Oh, is that what I'm doing wrong? I play these games and stand in the same spot for six hours thinking 'great I'm doing really well they haven't spotted me once'. **Richie:** I think people reading this Supertest will want to know what the best stealth game is here. And if biting your fingernails and sneaking about hoping you won't be seen is what we're after, then *Deus Ex* is not the game we want. It's still a great game, though. **Chris:** But if you do want a game where you bite your fingernails wandering around not being seen, basically, you're an arse. **Everyone:** (laughs) **Keith:** Things like the stealth weapons in *Deus Ex* don't really work at all. You try to kill someone and it takes about four hits and by that time they've raised the alarm.

Mark: Yes they do work, if you use the pod charger. If you come up behind them when they're not expecting it and hit them once straight in the head, that will take them out. **Rhianna:** Stealth isn't just about killing things from a long way away. You can be stealthy close up too.



MARK ON DEUS EX

"I think *Deus Ex* is the best stealth game here, because the levels are the best"

Keith: *Deus Ex* is not the best stealth game here. The stealth doesn't really work. **Chris:** I disagree. If you're playing a stealth/secret agent-type game you want to feel like you're in control. You want to play it the way *you* would do it in real life. A lot of these games just give you a map and a mission and you have to play them exactly the way the designers tell you to or you're sunk. **Paul:** So what you're saying is the key to a good stealth game is not being stealthy. **Everyone:** (laughs) **Chris:** No, what I'm saying is we have five stealth games on test here and one of them is a lot better than the other ones, and *Deus Ex* is it. **Rhianna:** I disagree. *Deus Ex* might be the best game here, but it's not the best stealth game and it won't get my vote when we choose a winner at the end. **Mark:** It's just struck me that we're all still arguing over how we're deciding the winner. **Everyone:** (laughs) **Chris:** OK, OK. I'll concede then if we're literally just looking for the best pure stealth game here, *Deus Ex* might not be it. Let's move on.



DEUS EX

With a large variety of game styles and an excellent storyline, it's impossible not to be drawn in by *Deus Ex*. It has the distinction of being the only game in this Supertest that gives you other ways to complete missions if you get bored of sneaking round and just want to go shoot someone in the head, which we like.

ORIGINAL SCORE	94%
DEVELOPER	Ion Storm
PUBLISHER	Eidos
REVIEWED	PCZ #93



If you're this close to your target, the base alert signals will go crazy any second now.

PROJECT IGI

Chris: I don't think this is the best stealth game here. If you really want a pure stealth 'em up, even *Project IGI* will be too exciting for you.

Everyone: (laughs)

Chris: On that basis, something like *Hitman* is not as good a game but it's a better stealth game. It's pure stealth and nothing else.

Richie: What you were saying earlier about being forced down certain avenues applies here. Gameplay-wise, *Project IGI* is probably the most restrictive game in this Supertest because either you're forced to sneak around in some missions, or it's just straight out shooting people. There's no in-between.

Chris: It has stealth, but it's all very linear. There's even little red dots denoting where the people who aren't supposed to see you

you're there. Spot a sniper in a tower and you can wait until he's not looking, scale a ladder, take him out, steal his rifle and take out half the enemies with it from a distance. You do things in the same way you would do if you were really there.

Mark: I don't think it's a stealth game at all.

Chris: Yes it is. You *have* to use stealth. As soon as you're seen you end up half-dead.

Mark: You can't just run around and shoot people, but you don't hide and wait for people to turn around all the time. You see a guard, you shoot him before he screams out to everyone else, you see a camera and you shoot it from far away so you don't get seen by it. You don't hide anywhere. There are not many hiding places.

“It seems like a good game, but I just can't get into it somehow. I found the controls slightly fiddly”

KEITH ON *PROJECT IGI*

Chris: Sorry, but you've been playing a different game to me, there are loads of places to hide.

Rhianna: There *are* places to hide in *Project IGI*.

Chris: There are hills and buildings to hide behind. You can do what Mark's saying and maybe take out one guy, but if you do it stealthily you can take out three or four without raising the alarm. I can't believe you don't think there's stealth in *Project IGI*.

Richie: It's about as stealthy as *Deus Ex*.

Chris: It's way more stealthy than *Deus Ex*. You can run around shooting everything in *Deus Ex* if you want. You can't do that in *Project IGI*.

Paul: I think there's an equal amount of gun-blazing action in both of them.

Rhianna: It's a shame it doesn't have a multiplayer option. All that space seems a bit wasted. It would have been more interesting to play against other people using all that space, and then you probably would have had a more stealthy game.

Richie: But none of these games have multiplayer options. They're designed as single-player games.

Rhianna: *Project IGI* just seems like a big single-player version of *Counter-Strike* to me.

Chris: I don't see how that can be a bad thing.

Rhianna: I'm not saying it's a bad thing, it just comes across that way to me.

Richie: I really enjoyed *Project IGI*. When you first play it you don't know whether to play it stealthily or to go in with all guns blazing. But no matter which one you choose, you always feel the AI is a little bit dumbed-down for gameplay reasons.

Chris: But if the AI was too realistic it would have been impossible to play.

Mark: They've got the AI at a level where you can play it properly. It makes you keep going back for more.

Richie: I think it's because it's in open areas, that makes it less stealthy. Most of the games here are played in enclosed areas, and when you strangle someone or whatever from a corner, you know you won't be seen because the

other guy is walking the other way. In *IGI* you use your sniper to take someone out in a big base and another guy who's patrolling, sees the dead body and thinks 'oh, somebody's copped it again'.

Everyone: (laughs)

Chris: No way. If you take someone out near another guard, the guard will run and raise the alarm and bring lots of people running towards you. It's happened to me a few times.

Mark: It's the same with a lot of these games, it's the sound. If you shoot someone in an open space the others will hear and come running.

Keith: I don't know what to make of *IGI*. It seems like a good game, but it's one of those games I just can't get into somehow. I don't know what it is. I found the controls slightly fiddly — that might be it.

Richie: It's a shooter. It has the same controls you get in all these games.

Chris: Apart from *Deus Ex*, this is the only game I know I'll come back to after this Supertest.

Richie: I've finished it so I won't be going back to it, but I quite enjoyed it while I was playing it. Even when you get detected and take damage, you press ahead

with it to see what happens. You know you probably can't complete the level and every step is do or die, but that's where the excitement comes in. It's the fact that you can't save your game in the middle of a mission that makes it so tense.

Keith: That's one of the things that ruins *Deus Ex*. You can save the game at any point then load it up and go in with all guns blazing because you know where everybody is.

Mark: You dirty rotten cheat.

Everyone: (laughs)

Richie: I think *IGI* is a good game, but for stealth there are better games here.



Climbing ladders stealthily is never easy.



are, but for all that I still thought there was something really addictive about it. I really like all those wide open areas, and you can explore the levels if you want. You can go to places you don't even have to go to.

Paul: That was great at first, but apart from a couple of levels with bases round the place, there's nothing much to see in it.

Chris: But it's the only game here that makes you really feel like



PROJECT IGI

A huge outdoor game environment and freedom to explore its levels make *Project IGI* the perfect choice for those of you looking for the fun factor in stealth games. It appears action-based at first, but good timing and a stealthy approach will make sure you last a lot longer in its enormous levels.

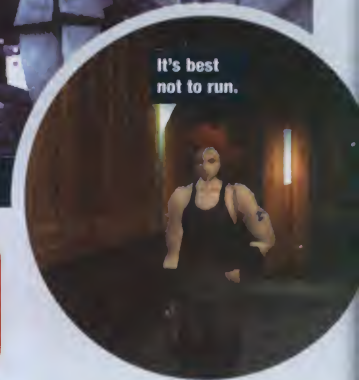
ORIGINAL SCORE	85%
DEVELOPER	Innerloop
PUBLISHER	Eidos
REVIEWED	PCZ#97



A great game, but better on console than PC.



MGS is basically an arcade game with token stealth elements.



METAL GEAR SOLID

Keith: I don't think this is much of a stealth game. It comes across more as a sort of third-person adventure shoot 'em up console game.

Chris: I was really surprised. It got all these rave reviews from console magazines. They hailed it as a classic and all the reviews went to great lengths to stress how stealthy it was, but when you play it, it looks and feels like a console shoot 'em up adventure.

Rhianna: It's almost like an arcade game.

Paul: You can tell it's a console game just by looking at the instructions. It

says 'press the x key on your gamepad to perform this action' and I thought, hang on what's all this about?

Chris: It was the same with *Final Fantasy*. Play it on a console and it's fine. Play it on a PC and you'll find the most obnoxious keyboard controls you've ever seen. Direct port syndrome.

Richie: It's a fantastic PlayStation game. I much prefer it on console, it works much better on a big TV. The screen seems slightly smaller too, not just because you're playing it on a monitor. The actual play area seems smaller for some

reason. You can't see as much. On PlayStation you can see a couple more things around the corner that you can't see on PC.

Paul: It takes a while to realise what you can see. If you want to be stealthy you have to spend half an hour just working out what you can see, if that makes any sense.

Mark: You have to approach it differently to how you approach all the other games here. You can't just take the role of a spy going into a place. It's much more abstract than that.

Chris: It just doesn't feel like it has any right being on PC. They haven't worked on it to utilise what the PC can do.

Paul: It's just not worthy.

Everyone: (laughs)

Chris: It probably did

well on PlayStation because it has no competition, but on PC there are lots of good stealth games.

Rhianna: There aren't really any elements of stealth in it.

Richie: Well there are, but it's more like a platform game, trying to avoid things instead of sneaking around the place.

Rhianna: The end-of-level baddies are very much geared towards a certain way of fighting, running around fast and shooting. Then you get the sniper ones. It's not particularly stealthy apart from when you're using the sniper rifle. You just have to take someone out while they're running between trees.

Keith: It has some stealth elements, like guards having to follow your footprints in the snow to find out where you are. But that's all at the beginning. I found as you go through the game it loses all these stealthy elements and suddenly you're firing rocket launchers at helicopters and stuff, which is not what you would expect to be doing in a stealth game.

Chris: You can tell just by looking at it that it's a PlayStation game. It's not a proper 3D game because you can't do a proper 3D game on the PlayStation, so they've had to do an arcade stealth 'em up instead because of the limitations of the PlayStation. You're not going to get a decent first-person game from that platform, but you get some good third-person arcade games, and that's what this is.

Mark: There's a first-person mode in the game.

Chris: Yes, but it doesn't work, you can't play the game that way,

and you have to hold the key down to stay in that view. It's not a proper first-person viewpoint.

Keith: I don't know how you do it, but you can go into a full first-person mode where you don't have to hold down the key. I think you have to complete the game to get it.

Chris: Oh really? Well that's good then.

Everyone: (laughs)

Chris: That's just completely ridiculous. You have to complete the game if you don't want to have to hold a key down in first-person. I wonder what genius thought that one up. They should have put that in the manual. Instructions for playing in first-person mode: a) complete game, b) start all over again.

Keith: The annoying thing about this game is once a base has been alerted, there are millions of

them all coming at you in a stealth game is stupid.

Richie: But you get that in *Project IGI* as well.

Chris: I don't really think it's fair to slag off *Metal Gear Solid* for not being stealthy. Even though they said on console that it was a pure stealth game and all the adverts said it was, and even the reviews on console said it was too, it's basically just an arcade game, but it's a good one.

Keith: I really liked it. I was immersed in it until the end.

Rhianna: It has a good storyline as well.

Chris: It's a great game, but not quite what we're looking for.

Keith: Whatever we say about it, it has the honour of being part of a series that was created by probably the first ever stealth game, which was *Metal Gear* on the NES.

"It's not particularly stealthy apart from when you're using the sniper rifle to take someone out"

RHIANNA ON METAL GEAR SOLID



guards that just appear out of nowhere and they keep appearing. It's like there's an infinite supply of them and I don't think that's what a stealth game should be about. There should be a set number of them, and if you scan around the buildings you should be able to find out where they are, pick them all off and just deal with them that way. To have

Chris: Which everyone has forgotten, except Keith.

Everyone: (laughs)

Keith: It came out in 1985 and it was the first ever stealth game where you had to hide from guards and stuff, and creep around a bit, looking around corners and over hedges.

Chris: It sounds terrible.

Keith: Of course it was terrible, it came out on the NES in 1985.

Chris: That'll be why then.



METAL GEAR SOLID

A huge hit on PlayStation, this title was highly anticipated when news was leaked that it was coming to PC. Unfortunately, *MGS* has a 'look and feel' that isn't right for PC and the panel agreed it was more enjoyable on PlayStation. Not so much a stealth game as a good arcade game with stealth elements attached.

ORIGINAL SCORE	82%
DEVELOPER	Konami
PUBLISHER	Microsoft
REVIEWED	PCZ #96



Much backstabbing with pointy knives is required in *Hitman*.

HITMAN: CODENAME 47

Chris: I have to admit I found this game incredibly annoying. It wasn't fun at all. Just really dull and boring.

Keith: I remember having to take out a Chinese gang leader or something, and the sniper sight was moving all over the place.

Chris: Graphics are rubbish, too.

Richie: I like the bit where you've got a dead body and you're

Mark: It has lots of flaws but it's still a good game.

Richie: *Hidden & Dangerous* has lots of bugs, but you still play it because it's such a great game.

Keith: I don't like it. Whatever the situation, whether you're hiding or doing a bit of sniping behind a corner or something, whenever a gang member comes along you just die instantly.

"I have to admit I found this game annoying. It wasn't fun at all. Just really dull and boring"

CHRIS ON *HITMAN*



dragging it along and its legs are dangling, or when you put it in a crate and it gets stuck. That was quite funny.

Chris: I can see how you would find that amusing, but it hardly makes for a great game on that basis alone.

Richie: I quite enjoyed it. It chugs along and it's got loads of bugs but I still liked it.

Suddenly a helicopter will appear out of nowhere or maybe someone will just jump you and then you're dead.

Paul: The helicopter mission is one of the earlier ones. How long did you play it for?

Chris: I agree with Keith. And you don't have to play a game for eight days to decide you don't like it. I only played the first four or five levels, and you couldn't pay me to play it again.

Mark: It's a lot like *Hidden & Dangerous* in the sense you never play through a level just once. You have to play through the levels six or seven times before you know what you're doing.

Paul: A bit like *Project IGI*.

Mark: You learn the levels and the way they work before you get them right.

Chris: And then you fall asleep in the process.

Paul: It's like a 3D adventure game. You have to solve puzzles and work each level out.

Mark: There are a lot of puzzles. It's not just about killing people.

Chris: The biggest puzzle I came across was trying to work out where the fun was.

Richie: What I liked was finding clothes, having to put on a mask or whatever to get past people. **Keith:** That's all right if you're into Barbie and stuff like that.

Mark: It's not much of a stealth game though. The only thing that's stealthy about it is you can't be seen in areas you shouldn't be in, and there aren't many of them. And if you've got a gun you have to wear the right clothes to go with it, otherwise people will recognise you.



Walking around trying not to get noticed is essential, if not very exciting.



Often, you will survey your mission area from this viewpoint.

Chris: It's not a stealth game.

You look at a level, work out what you've got to do and then just go do it. There's nothing stealthy about that.

Mark: The levels in which you knife people in the back aren't exactly stealthy. You bump into them sometimes, and they stare at you holding a big knife. Then you just walk around the back of them and stab them.

Chris: I don't like it. It's not the best stealth game here, and it's certainly not the best game.

Mark: I think it's good but the second set of missions in the jungle were rubbish. You have to get through them before you move on to another good bit.

Chris: Did you play it Rhianna?

Rhianna: Not much. I didn't really get on with it.

Chris: See? It's not as if anybody even wants to play it. Let's move on then.



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

More of a puzzle game than a pure stealth game, *Hitman* relies on taxing the grey matter as opposed to providing any kind of adrenalin rush, and our panel gave it a mixed reception. You'll either love it or hate it, depending on whether you have the patience to live with its slow pace, and you don't mind dying a lot.

ORIGINAL SCORE	85%
DEVELOPER	IO Interactive
PUBLISHER	Eidos
REVIEWED	PCZ #98



"They'll never see me up here."



Standing near a light source isn't recommended.

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

Rhianna: This is actually my favourite game here. I got into it a lot more than I got into the other ones. It's quite engaging. I like all the different gadgets you get, the different types of arrows etc. Once you actually learned to aim properly, it was good fun. I thought the AI was a bit dumb in places though. You hit someone and they just run at you and it's a straightforward fight. They don't run away like they do in *Deus Ex*. **Richie:** I hate the arrows. I remember going to Eidos to see *Thief I* and the developer was saying: "We've

got these really neat arrows that drop on the floor," and I thought why go to all the trouble of messing about with arrows. Why not just put some slippers on?

Everyone: (stares blankly at Richie in silence)

Richie: No seriously, why not just put some slippers on?

Rhianna: Richie, what are you going on about?

Richie: I don't see the point in firing moss arrows at the floor. If someone came to your flat to assassinate you for example, if the guy had slippers on, he'd probably manage it.

Everyone: (laughs)

Richie: It would be much better with slippers. If you were at home and you saw a big arrow flying through your window you'd think 'oh no, some assassin is coming to get me'. But with slippers you wouldn't even know he was there.

Mark: I can sort of see your point. Considering you're a thief and you're not supposed to be heard, you'd think you'd have the best slippers in town.

Richie: Exactly.

Keith: I think this is the best stealth game here, but I don't think it's the best game here overall.

Deus Ex probably

is, but this has got every kind of stealth element you could possibly want. Hiding in the shadows, creeping up on people...

Chris: It's not my kind of thing I have to admit. I don't like the setting. I'd rather have a modern-day stealth game with big guns and sniper rifles than mess about with arrows.

Keith: They could take the blueprint for *Thief II*, put it into a modern-day setting and it would be excellent. We've talked about this before. For me, this is definitely the best stealth game here. It has all the elements you want from a game of this type.

Rhianna: It's got brilliant sound.

Keith: Yes, the sound is amazing.

Rhianna: The way you sound when you're walking about is important, and whether you're walking across metal or walking across tiles, it all makes a difference. There are so many times when you're forced to listen to what's going on. You hear footsteps coming round the corner and you get more and more paranoid, until you suddenly realise it's actually coming from above you where the guards are walking by. I thought *Deus Ex* would have good use of sound but it's not as good as *Thief 2*.

Paul: I liked the sword fights.

Keith: The sword fights were terrible, probably the worst thing about it.

Paul: They're quite good when you get used to it, when you get used to blocking and things.

Chris: The sword fights are awful.

Keith: You're supposed to avoid them anyway. The whole point of

the game is to sneak about and not get seen.

Chris: That's the trouble with most of these games though. They encourage you to avoid any kind of excitement at all costs.

Keith: *Thief II* is the only game here where you can go through the entire game without actually killing anyone.

Paul: That's what the gameplay is geared towards.

Rhianna: In the hard mode you're not supposed to kill people.



"I don't see the point in firing moss arrows at the floor. Seriously, why not just put some slippers on?"

RICHE ON THIEF II

the water arrows to short-circuit the robots for example.

Richie: Don't get me started on water arrows...

Keith: It's still a good game.

Mark: It's a great game. I love the security camera bits. It's like *System Shock 2*, it worked brilliantly.

Rhianna: Enemies tend to get stuck in places. They get stuck behind ladders a lot, but it doesn't detract from the game.

Keith: I like the fact that you can even hide in water. You can hide in dark muddy water so you don't get seen. Again, the stealth elements are better than in any of the other games here.

Paul: *Thief II* has its faults but for pure stealth gameplay you can't beat it.

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE

With emphasis placed purely on stealth, anyone looking for a game that has even casual action elements should stay away from *Thief 2*, unless you count the sword fights which are hugely laughable. But if you're looking for a game where stealth matters more than any other factor, *Thief 2* has no equals.

ORIGINAL SCORE

82%

DEVELOPER

Looking Glass

PUBLISHER

Eidos

REVIEWED

PCZ #88

LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE

The chat is over. Time to find a winner

Paul: *Thief II*.

Rhianna: *Thief II*.

Keith: I'm absolutely torn.

between *Deus Ex* and *Thief II*.

Chris: So am I. Actually no I'm not. I lied just then.

Everyone: (laughs)

Chris: I think *Deus Ex* should win, because if there isn't a really good modern-day stealth game out there, we should be telling people to buy *Deus Ex*. It has really good stealth elements but it also has a lot more.

Richie: I'm tempted to be swayed by Chris's arguments, just because *Deus Ex* hasn't got stupid bloody arrows in it.

Everyone: (laughs)

Rhianna: Everyone knows we like *Deus Ex*, everyone knows it's a really good game. It's just predictable to go for *Deus Ex* all the time. It's already won another Supertest.

Keith: That's irrelevant. If it deserves to win, it should win.

Rhianna: But it's not the best stealth game. It's a great game but it's not a great game across the board.

Richie: What people don't realise about *Deus Ex*, is it's also the best turn-based strategy game ever made.

Everyone: (laughs)

Keith: I'm going to go for *Thief II*, because it's the only game here that you can literally stealth all the way through it, and that's what this Supertest is all about.

Rhianna: I agree.

Chris: I'm going to go for *Deus Ex*, because it doesn't force you to use stealth. I don't think stealth alone makes for interesting gameplay. You have to have something else, and *Deus Ex* has stealth as an option.

Keith: *Thief II* has something else, you can try to make as much money as you can.

Chris: Alright then, *Thief II* has stealth, and some money,

Deus Ex has stealth plus a million other things.

Mark: I'm going to go for *Deus Ex*, because I played it stealthily. I know you can play it other ways, but that's the best way I think there is to play it. There are places where you have to use stealth, and it's done much better than in *Thief II*.

Chris: That's how I played it too, I used stealth all the way. I didn't go in with all guns blazing, I held back quite a lot.

Richie: I'm torn between the two, but I'm going to go for *Thief II* because we're looking for a stealth game and for stealth it's the best game here.

Rhianna: I'm going to stick with *Thief II*. It's very absorbing, there are different ways of completing the levels, and for pure stealth it has the edge over all the others.

Chris: Four against two. *Thief II* it is then.



Deus Ex: a great game, but just not stealthy enough for this Supertest.

ALSO CONSIDER

Pure stealth or shoot 'em up strategy? You choose

If sneaking about and hiding in shadows is not your thing and you like the idea of a stealth game but fancy a little more action to go with it, both these games are well worth considering.

COMMANDOS

This plays very much like a real-time strategy game, but it also has its fair share of sneaking about and coming up behind the enemy when they are unprepared. Similar to *H&D* in that it places its emphasis more on strategy than stealth, *Commandos* is justifiably considered a classic and if it's not in your games collection, it should be.



Commandos: a stealth strategy alternative.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

Plagued with bugs, *Hidden & Dangerous* does its level best to make you dislike it, but you can't hide the fact that for sheer addictive gameplay it has few equals. More of a strategy game than a stealth game, *H&D* is a great alternative to the sneak 'em ups in this Supertest.



Hidden & Dangerous: 3rd person stealth/action at its best.

SUPERTEST WINNER

Thief II sneaks its way into first place in a very stealthy way, even with those crazy sword fights

Thief II takes the honours then, despite hefty competition from *Deus Ex*. On reflection, given the nature of the Supertest, there was never going to be another winner. *Deus Ex* was considered by most of the panel to be the 'best' game under review in this test, but ultimately we were looking for the best stealth game, and *Thief II* is stealth in its purest form from start to finish. A point to note from this month's Supertest is just about all the games here are worth

your money for different reasons. Most of you will already be aware of *Deus Ex*'s pedigree, but *Project IG1* and *Metal Gear Solid* are both excellent games in their own right. Only *Hitman* caused controversy, proving to be a game you will either love or hate. Be sure to check out a demo of this title before purchasing it if you like the sound of it. All the others you can buy safe in the knowledge you will be taking home a PC game of the highest quality.

OVERALL WINNER



Thief II steals the victory.

GADGETS

This month we've road tested all sorts of tasty treats for you...

JUKEBOX 6000

£351 • Archos • 01672 810 366 • www.archos.com

How cool is this? The Jukebox 6000 from Archos is primarily a portable MP3 player that can hold up to 6Gb of audio (about 10 or 12 full albums). However, it also doubles up as a portable USB hard drive and you can mix and match MP3 and data making it one of the most versatile storage devices we've had in our grubby little hands. It's also truly portable, and much smaller than Creative's equivalent Nomad device.

It couldn't be easier to use either – hook it up to your PC via the USB cable, install the driver when prompted and the Jukebox turns up as an extra hard drive that you can drag and drop files onto. Any MP3 files you copy over show up on the LCD whenever the Jukebox is powered up. Data sits there invisibly until you hook it up to another PC.

Seeing as we're miserable bastards, however, we're not going to let it off without a few snipes: to be honest it's not the prettiest pig at the market; it's quite heavy and the buttons on the front fascia feel a bit cheap. There's also no dedicated volume dial – instead you have to go through the on-screen menu – and the headphones you get in the box are rubbish. Ignoring these minor(ish) points, as a dual-purpose gadget this is definitely the future. Now why did we have to go and sign that loan form? ☹☹☹☹☹

☹ The Jukebox 6000 is a must-have gadget for rich kids everywhere.



☹ Not much bigger than a DVD disc. Stick it on your Christmas list now.

PORTABLE DVD PLAYER

£499 • Tiny • 0870 165 6611 • www.tiny.com

Every now and again we're plucked from the confines of our dusty basement and sent across the Atlantic to marvel at the size of our American cousins and catch up on the latest games that might never get released.

Unlike other celebrities, however, we're not afforded the luxury of business-class travel, and have to spend hours cooped-up in conditions that calves would balk at, with knees rammed up against our ears, and a single cinema screen that plays endless snippets from *Notting Hill* and *You've Got Mail*.

It sounds bad, but there is a simple, if slightly expensive, solution. The Tiny Portable DVD Player doesn't need much in the way of explanation, bar the facts that it is pretty tiny, displays a more-than-decent picture on the 6.8in screen and comes complete with in-built Dolby Digital Decoder and slightly weedy stereo speakers.

The only drawback is the battery it comes with, it only gives you about three and a half hours of playback, and although that isn't actually too bad for a unit like this, it does mean that for half of your cross-Atlantic flight you're going to have to engage bored stewardesses in conversation. ☹☹☹☹☹

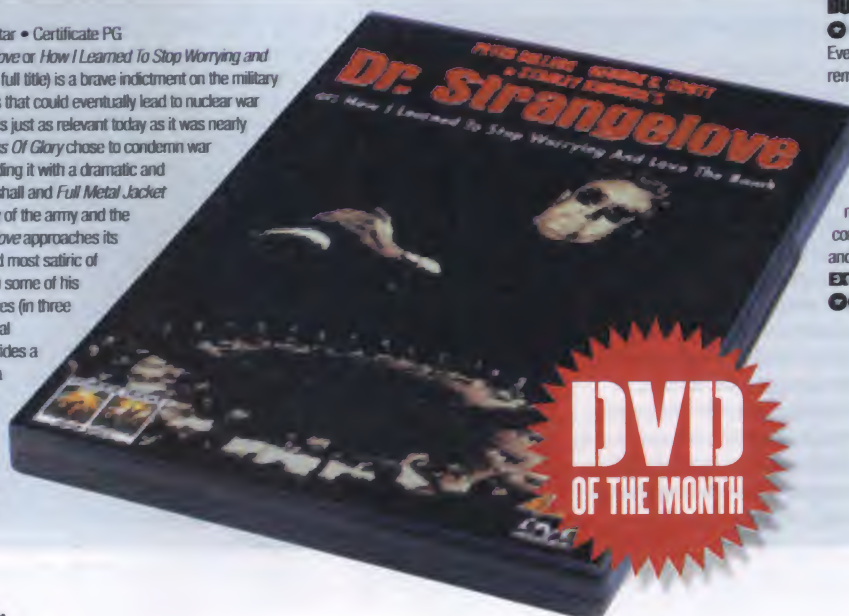
DVDS

DR STRANGELOVE

☹ £18.49 • Columbia Tristar • Certificate PG

Stanley Kubrick's *Dr Strangelove or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love The Bomb* (to give it its full title) is a brave indictment on the military and political power struggles that could eventually lead to nuclear war and global annihilation, and is just as relevant today as it was nearly 40 years ago. While his *Paths Of Glory* chose to condemn war and the bureaucracy surrounding it with a dramatic and Kafkaesque WWI court-martial and *Full Metal Jacket* concentrated on the brutality of the army and the Vietnam battlefield, *Strangelove* approaches its subject with the blackest and most satirical of humour. Peter Sellers puts in some of his most memorable performances (in three different roles) but it's the final sequence, where an officer rides a nuclear missile as if it were a rodeo buffalo, that will stay in your mind the longest. Funny, thought provoking and indispensable.

EXTRA FEATURES Trailers • Filmographies • Galleries
○○○○○



DVD OF THE MONTH

DUNE – SPECIAL TV EDITION

☹ £18.49 • Castle Home Video • Cert 15

Even though it was released last autumn with Westwood's *Dune* remake game on the cover, we thought it fitting to try out this rehash of David Lynch's disjointed and much maligned take on Frank Herbert's *Dune* series.

With an extra 35 minutes of footage, much of it coming at the start, this TV Edition is certainly more approachable than Lynch's original cut, which is one of the reasons he withdrew his name from the credits. Elsewhere, the film (and unfortunately Sling's contribution) remains largely intact and is as grandiose, atmospheric and confusing as it always was.

EXTRA FEATURES 35 mins extra footage • Theatrical trailer
○○○○○



IFeel OPTICAL MOUSE£39.99 • Logitech • 01738 70900 • www.logitech.com

We've had vibrating joysticks, rumbling gamepads, even ear-tickling headphones and now this: a mouse that jerks – ever so slightly – each time the mouse pointer runs over an icon, window or hyperlink.

It actually works rather well, even if it does feel a little odd at first. You can choose what sort of feedback you'd prefer to experience, from metallic to spongy internal twangs and if you so wish, even mess about with the feedback settings. The mouse itself is well made, fits snug under the palm, the optical sensors are accurate and both the buttons and wheel are weighted almost perfectly.

But do you really need it? Well, not really. It works well in games like *Black & White* and there are sure to be more compatible games on the way, but it's hardly as essential as a force feedback joystick. If you are in the market for a high-quality USB mouse, the Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse is essentially the same, only without the rumble. ★★★★★



Ⓒ A seemingly innocuous mouse, but this one rumbles.

RUMBLEFX£40 • Evergreen Technologies • 01793 601 300 • www.rumblefx.co.uk

Force feedback headphones? Oh, how we laughed. As far as concepts go, it's up there with force feedback underpants and scratch 'n' sniff first-person shooters. Still, as the saying goes: he who laughs last, laughs loudest, and Evergreen is obviously looking pretty

smug at the moment, because the sad truth is these headphones are pretty damn funky.

The main reason for this is that the sound hasn't been skimped on because of the gimmick – if you use them as standard cans you won't have any complaints about quality. Alternatively, you can flick the switch on the controller and select from two levels of rumble.

Unlike game controllers, the force feedback effects aren't directly related to the games you're playing, but work on low-end frequencies, converting these into vibrations. This means you don't have to install any drivers and you can also use the headphones (complete with rumble) with any box that has a headphone socket.

To be honest, it's still a gimmick rather than something you just can't live without. After a week of having our lobes tickled we've switched the effects off.

There are also better headphones on the market for the same cash, but if you're looking for something different they're worth a look. Whatever next, though? A force feedback monitor? ★★★★★



Ⓒ April Fool's Day has come and gone. These are for real.

SIGHT FIGHTER VIBRATION FEEDBACK£24.99 • Trust • www.trust.com

The thrill of force feedback has well and truly gone. A couple of years back we'd still have been pretty excited to feel a shock pass through our hands after veering off the road in *Colin McRae 2*. These days everything is shocked-up, including the pair of headphones we've reviewed on these pages.

What really counts is the shape, durability and features of the pad. In this case the Sight Fighter is no more than adequate, although it does try to extend itself by offering a joystick, a pretty redundant and laughable 'steering-wheel' type contraption surrounding the D-Pad and the usual massive number of buttons, including two sets of triggers.

The biggest problem is that despite laying claim to a bewildering number of different shaped hands in the *ZONE* office, we couldn't find anyone who actually found the thing comfortable. The top two trigger buttons are placed in an almost impossible position and the overall effect is that everything is too spread out. Still, if you're an overgrown freak it might be heaven. ★★★★★



Ⓒ Rule #1: always make sure your testers have normal sized hands.

RING

★ £16.99 • Tartan Video • Cert 15

Ring has been proclaimed as the scariest horror film in years, although when you find out that the premise centres around a killer videotape you might be more inclined to stifle a snigger. Don't. Like *Blair Witch*, *Ring* is an excellently crafted, original and extremely scary film that works on many levels, and it's planets above the 'ironic' and hugely boring *Scream* series. You can also forget about action horrors like *Final Destination*, as *Ring* works via suggestion, silence and expression, and taps into your imagination in the way that only superior horror films can manage. As usual, watch it on your own, in the dark, but don't come running to us blubbing like a baby if you can't handle it.

EXTRA FEATURES UK trailer • Stills • Star and director filmographies

• *Ring 2* trailer ★★★★★

**TITAN A.E.**

★ £19.99 • 20th Century Fox • Cert PG

As visually impressive as *Tron* was 20 years ago, *Titan A.E.* manages to combine rich computer animation with smooth hard-drawn techniques to provide what is undoubtedly the most technically accomplished animated film to date. It looks gorgeous, and along with its highly entertaining script and the vocal talents of Matt Damon and Drew Barrymore, it sounds good too.

Unfortunately the story itself comes across as a bland mix of anime and Disney, a shady cliché-ridden tale of saving the universe, yet again. Thankfully, the story is something you can push to the back of your mind; just enjoy the ride and make sure you take your eyeballs out for a wash afterwards.

EXTRA FEATURES Commentary • Making Of • Deleted scenes • Gallery

• Trailers • Music video

★★★★★

**TERMINATOR**

★ £21.99 • MGM • 15 Certificate

It's incredible to think the original *Terminator* movie was released 17 years ago, and yet, all these years later, it's still enjoying as much success as it did back in 1984. Arnie is superb as the killing machine, while Linda Hamilton puts in a decent performance as his naive target, Sarah Connor.

Sent back to 1984 from 2029 – a time where super-computers rule the earth, and humans are mere slaves – the Terminator must track down and kill Sarah Connor – the mother to be of humanity's last hope. *Terminator* is an incredibly tense, superbly directed and often terrifying film, in which humans fight machines in a good versus evil battle. It may look a bit dated now, but this film wrote the rulebook on how to make the ultimate sci-fi action/adventure.

EXTRA FEATURES (Among others) Remastered soundtrack •

Terminator – A Retrospective •

Deleted Scenes • Trailers •

Production photos • Various

drafts of the script

★★★★★



BUYER'S GUIDE

This month *Tim Ponting* takes a 'wheely' good look at some controllers, even though there's not a whole lot out there to recommend. And if you can't stretch to a 19in budget monitor as featured last issue, here's a quick reminder on the specs of our favourite 17incher. Plus we've updated all the prices for you, and included some nice surprises

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY



ABIT KT-7A RAID

STREET PRICE £141, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Abit

TELEPHONE (01438) 741999 **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

Back in our Christmas Upgrade feature, we recommended the KT-7 RAID from Abit. Since then, there's been an upgrade to the KT-7A RAID. This adds support for 266MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) 'C'-type Athlons. Why are we not recommending next-gen AMD or Intel-based systems with DDR/RAMBUS memory? Because currently, the speed benefits are tiny compared with the extra cost. We like the Abit motherboard for its ATA-100 support (faster hard drive performance) and over-clocking potential. The chipset also has its own fan.

~~£180~~
£141

BEST BUDGET



GIGABYTE GA-7ZM

STREET PRICE £87, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Gigabyte

TELEPHONE (01908) 362700

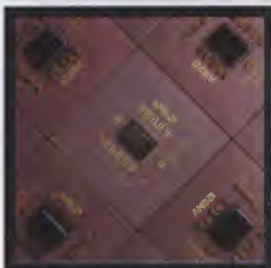
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

~~£90~~
£87

This is basically a sawn-off equivalent of our preferred motherboard, utilising the older chipset version (VIA KT133) and in Micro-ATX format – one AGP and three PCI slots. It'll take both Athlon and Duron Socket A processors of varying speeds, so has upgrade potential. I've used GB motherboards for years and found them the best of the cheaper brands.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY



AMD 1.2GHZ ATHLON

STREET PRICE £200

MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE (01276) 803100 **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

AMD has achieved the unthinkable, toppling Intel from both the performance and price-performance perches simultaneously. We really can't find any reason for gamers to embrace Intel unless they're upgrading into an existing motherboard, in which case you'll have no choice. The 1.2GHz Athlon is a screamer, and surprisingly cheap at around £200. In the bad old days, Intel's top processors set you back more than £500. How competition has changed things! As Athlons over 1GHz are available only in Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. You'll also need to fit a hefty fan.

~~£250~~
£200

BEST BUDGET



AMD 800MHZ DURON

STREET PRICE £63, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER AMD

TELEPHONE (01276) 803100

WEBSITE www.amd.com

~~£76~~
£63

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY



IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Mb

STREET PRICE £115, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER IBM

TELEPHONE (0800) 169 1458 **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

I find it hard to believe that you can buy a 30Gb ATA-100 hard drive for less than £120 – particularly one as excellent as IBM's Deskstar 75GXP. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need around £310 to buy such a beast.

~~£180~~
£115

BEST BUDGET



SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb

STREET PRICE £73, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Seagate

TELEPHONE (01628) 890366

WEBSITE www.seagate.com

~~£90~~
£73

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents! Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY



IYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in

STREET PRICE £720

MANUFACTURER iiyama

TELEPHONE (01438) 745482 **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of Iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtrond NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2,048x1,536.

BEST BUDGET



HANSOL 710P 17in

STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Hansol

TELEPHONE (01252) 360400

WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1,024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1,600x1,200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUY



ELSA GLADIAC 920

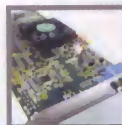
STREET PRICE £405, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Elsa

TELEPHONE (0800) 056 3445 **WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

For two months it's been our Best Buy, but can you actually buy the little booger yet? Nope! The delay is pretty irrelevant as it'll be months before games start to take advantage of its capabilities – but we've seen it running and it rocks. It's based on the new king of the 3D castle, NVIDIA's GeForce3 chipset, formerly codenamed NV20. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0 – hardly surprising since NVIDIA's been heavily involved with the specification of Microsoft's 3D API for a while. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV and comes with a full, enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

BEST BUDGET



VIDEOLOGIC VIVID! 32Mb

STREET PRICE £75, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER VideoLogic

TELEPHONE (01923) 277488

WEBSITE www.videologic.com



Since we reviewed the Vivid! last month, its price has tumbled again. It may be the first iteration of the PowerVR Series 3, but at this price it's fabulous value. It lags behind cards based on the NVIDIA GeForce 2 MX chipset in games that support hardware T&L, but is an ideal companion for mid-range systems running games at lower resolutions.

SOUND CARD

BEST BUY



VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY

STREET PRICE £60-75, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER VideoLogic

TELEPHONE (01923) 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 96 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.

BEST BUDGET



SOUNDBLASTER PCI512

STREET PRICE £45, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

TELEPHONE (01189) 344322

WEBSITE www.soundblaster.com

As Creative's SoundBlaster Live! reaches the end of its shelf life, the company has released a cut-down version featuring the same chipset – the SoundBlaster PCI512. Providing all the bells and whistles required by gamers, this cheaper card represents superb value for money while still supporting DirectSound 3D acceleration and Environmental Audio (EAX).

SPEAKERS

BEST BUY



VIDEOLOGIC SIROCCO CROSSFIRE

STREET PRICE £210, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER VideoLogic

TELEPHONE (01923) 277488 **WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

Quite how many times this speaker set is going to appear in *ZONE* halls of fame, I'm not sure, but it shows no sign of being eclipsed in terms of quality for 4.1 gaming. By 4.1 we mean, front left and right and rear left and right satellite speakers, coupled with a big meaty subwoofer. The fact that this speaker set is rated at 100W RMS doesn't sound that impressive – but when you consider that you can crank the dial around 80 per cent of the way before they start to distort, you'll understand our fondness for these. And with 1000W Peak Mean Power Output on tap, the loud bits are, um, really flipping loud.

BEST BUDGET



ALTEC LANSING ATP3

STREET PRICE £75

MANUFACTURER Altec Lansing

TELEPHONE N/A

WEBSITE www.alteclansing.com

The only other multimedia speaker company we've ever had time for is Altec Lansing, whose decently priced products never fail to impress, even if they lack the hi-fi credentials of VideoLogic products. The ATP3 is a sub and two sat combination that delivers a typically meaty, crisp Altec sound. If your budget stretches, you can try the ATP5 for 4.1 gaming.

WHEELS

BEST BUY



MICROSOFT FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

STREET PRICE £85 (shop around...)

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100 **WEBSITE** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

A couple of years ago, there was a bewildering array of driving wheels and/or pedal sets, from hideous plastic crapola devices to high-end, pricey dreamboats. Then all of a sudden, the expensive ones disappeared, presumably because no one bought them. Instead, wheels became one of two things – cheap and nasty with no force feedback or expensive and nasty with force feedback. The only exception, albeit the most expensive, is the Microsoft FF Wheel. We still don't think it's the ultimate wheel, but at less than £90 – and with the best FF engine in the market – it's certainly your best bet at the moment.

BEST BUDGET



THRUSTMASTER FERRARI 360 MODENA WHEEL

STREET PRICE £58

MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster

TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600

WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

There's not much choice at this end of the market, but the best of a bad bunch is the Thrustmaster 360 Modena. If nothing else the Modena looks gorgeous and has plenty of button action. Alternatively, look for an old Thrustmaster wheel or a Digital Edge one in a car boot sale...

MOUSE

BEST BUY



RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000

STREET PRICE £70, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Labtec

TELEPHONE (01256) 386000 **WEBSITE** www.razerzone.com, www.labtec.com

These fabulous über-mice have been the instrument of death for the *Quake* elite for a couple of years now. During this time, the only way you could get your hands on one was to import it from America and pay a premium, as you couldn't actually buy them in this country. But now all this has changed, thanks to Labtec picking up the hardware. OK, so it is rather expensive and it also takes quite a bit of getting used to, but if you're looking for a real lift to your gaming, then the Razer Boomslang 2000 is the only way to go.

BEST BUDGET



MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE

STREET PRICE £15, inc VAT

MANUFACTURER Microsoft

TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100

WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/mouse/intellimouse.htm

The basic USB IntelliMouse is one of the finest control devices ever produced – accurate, comfortable to use and, above all, cheap. In fact, all the fancy mice Microsoft has produced since then are deeply inferior for gaming in our opinion, mainly due to shape and button positioning.

SOUNDING OFF

Music and sound in general is often last in line behind design, story, gameplay and art when a game is being created. **Paul Rigby** investigates why sound gets such a raw deal

Music is often regarded as the least important, often neglected and most derided part of any computer game.

Game players seek out special effects and digital speech, but all too often hit the 'music off' switch button after experiencing only minutes of a game's musical score. Comments to this particular writer from disaffected gamers have ranged from the "It's boring!" and "Irritating" to the plain, "It just gets in the way". The question is why? Does all computer-based music prompt this sort of response? Is it all bad? If so, what's going wrong? Do developers have a low opinion of music and see it as a necessary evil? Are the composers to blame?

RIGHT OFF

Richard Joseph, co-partner in BAFTA award-winning outfit, Audio Interactive, takes a pragmatic approach to the question: "If the sound or music 'gets in the way' then it can't have been right in the first place. On the one hand I feel it helps give games audio a bad name when development companies add annoying bells and whistles to games when they don't really need them and, on the other hand, I don't complain when the developer

phones up and ask for them."

So, taking Joseph's standpoint, gamers are interested in music, the problem is that they're possibly not being served properly. Dean Evans, audio producer for Warthog confirms this view: "If you watch a Hammer horror film with the theme from *Benny Hill* playing I can guarantee that it isn't going to frighten you - which shows how inappropriate audio can damage the atmosphere you're trying to portray. A good game can be made great with the right audio but a good game can also be crippled when audio doesn't fit."

James Hannigan, co-partner in Audio Interactive, reasons that the problem is at source and that sound gets a raw deal from a lack of developer time and resources: "Imagine a film with gaping holes in the soundtrack, the product would be noticeably incomplete. Even low budgets films (with comparable budgets to low budget games) recognise the need for 'full' production and won't skimp on audio (in some cases even spending half their available budget on music and sound). Unfortunately for us, those filmmakers are often better trained and more aware of aesthetic issues than some of their counterparts in the games industry but that is all beginning to change now."

MAKING MONEY

Changing, yes, but slowly. Why is sound still left until late in the development cycle? Possibly because, in present day business terms, when showcasing a game to a publisher or a money-man, in the middle of the development cycle, sound really is the least important element - the publishers are not going to 'can' a silent game if the graphics and gameplay are shaping up. These are obviously crucial elements and it's arguably right that the developer should concentrate on them at the expense of audio. Also, from a sound design point of view, it's very useful to have a fair amount of the game already in place before starting work on the audio.

"Let's face it, you're hardly going to get a film editor working on a movie if they haven't shot any of it. It's when a game is approaching alpha that sound usually starts to become an important issue. Even then though, there can be many changes made to a game between alpha and code lock. For me, the ideal situation would be to have several weeks of post-production time after the game is finished," says Audio Interactive's Richard Joseph.

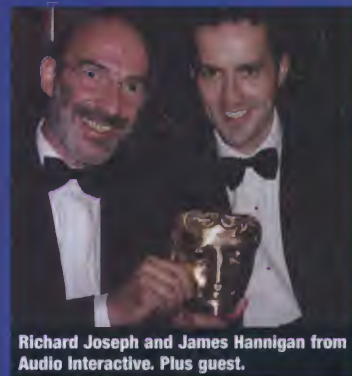
AT THE MOVIES

Having that time at the end is what they do in movies because they've learned that it works best that way. In games, creativity is dictated by marketing schedules rather than aesthetic considerations (and indeed consideration for anyone or anything but the executives and shareholders) so there's not much chance of that situation changing. A properly designed computer soundtrack should enhance gameplay. With new variations being generated on the fly, the boredom factor of hearing the same track over and over will be less of an issue, even when starting off with a small amount of source material. However, comparing movie soundtracks with computer game soundtracks is a bit of a minefield as the two are not really alike.

The advantage of writing a cinema soundtrack is that there is generally no variation on what the

viewer is going to see "This is a luxury you have as a film composer," explains Bjorn Lynne, audio manager at Team17. "Because you know that at exactly 00:34:05 the bad guy is going to make his entry, so you can build up to that. And this is where movie music is at its best, when it's giving you the feeling of something about to happen. However, when scoring for a game, you don't really have this luxury, because you don't know exactly when something is going to happen and, because of this, you can't really use 'suggestive' music in the same way as you can use it in a movie."

With a PC game you can play through one scene, enter another



Richard Joseph and James Hannigan from Audio Interactive. Plus guest.



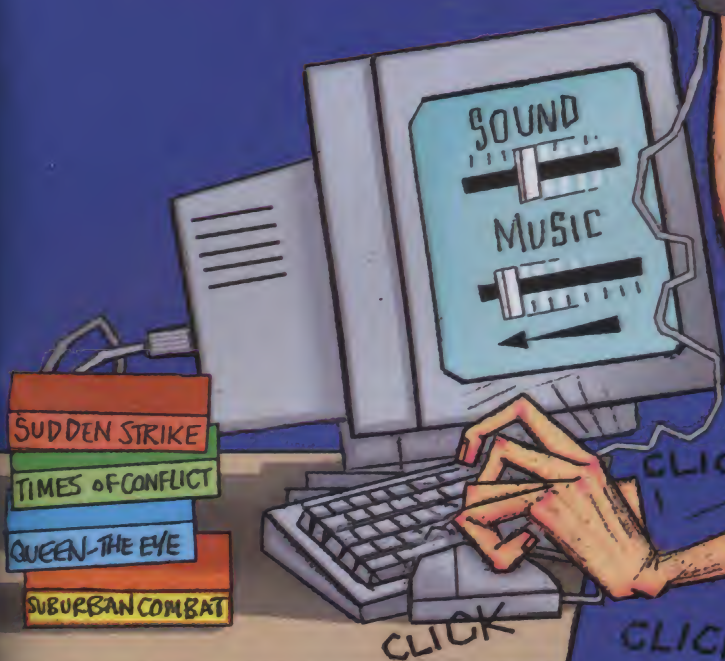
Team 17's sound and music man, Bjorn Lynne.



Game soundtracks are harder to produce than film music, according to Eidos' Graeme Monk.



Homeworld's classical soundtrack sounded good and fitted the mood of the game.



❖ If the sound or music 'gets in the way' then it can't have been right in the first place ❖

RICHARD JOSEPH, AUDIO INTERACTIVE

← and then decide you want to go back to the previous scene. What happens to the music? Does it play the same track again, a different one or doesn't it bother? Graeme Monk, senior producer at Eidos (who's currently working on *Gangsters 2* and *Startopia*), says: "The solution lies in the type/genre of the game and the skill of the musician and the development team. Creating game soundtracks requires a great deal of

☺ Now that's rock 'n' roll.

skill, especially when there could be a number of events kicking off, each with their own independent theme and each of which needs to be mixed together."

STAR TURNS

One of the growing trends of music in games is the use of celebrities and, as such, it can be argued to be as much a marketing point as a creative factor. Just how much such artists actually help the sales of a product or enhance the playing experience for the player is both up to the publisher's accountants and your own tastes. On the other side of the coin it could be argued that, artistically, somebody who works with the rest of the game development team can often create better music for that particular game, rather than just slapping in a track that has nothing to do with the game at all. Then again, not every developer can write big enough cheques to work with the celebrities of the day in the first place. Electronic Arts, patently, can. Nick Laviers, head of audio at the UK office says: "It's a nice thing to be able to do but I don't believe it's of fundamental importance. Speaking as a gamer, I'm not going to buy *FIFA* just because it has Chumbawumba on it, and that was probably one of the most appropriate uses of licensed music as it tied in with what people were getting from the media at the time. I



☺ No wonder most of you turn the music off your games.

always choose music on the criteria of how appropriate it is to the game (admittedly for a sports game it has to be perceived as contemporary and leading edge). The Trent Reznor *Quake* model is very much our approach, ie find an artist whose aura and music suits the product."

Lionhead's Russell Shaw thinks it's basically a good idea but believes the focus is all wrong: "I would much rather use respected film composers than pop stars," he asserts.

BEST AND WORST

So what are the best and worst games to write a soundtrack for? Nick Laviers is sure about the worst: "It's *Dungeon Keeper II*, because you can use any game object at any time, which means all the sound has to be available throughout. The implications are that you store less variations for a single type of sound. Also, because you can go anywhere in the world at any time, this creates massive context shifts

APOLLO 440 - SOUNDTRACKERS

Pumping up the action with big name talent

An ever increasing amount of celebrity artists have become involved in producing or supplying music for computer games. Chart favourites Apollo 440 being one of them. Sometimes bands are commissioned (eg *Spiderman*, *Rapid Racer*, *Euro 2000*) and other times songs are licensed after they've already been released (eg *FIFA 2000*, *Adidas Power Soccer*). Apollo 440 has enjoyed its gaming experiences because they felt they have pushed their own creative boundaries. Noko, one of the composers/producers in the group, declares: "*Rapid Racer* was remarkable in that we were commissioned to score the whole game - like a movie. There were five separate geographical terrains (ie ice, volcanic, lava, mountain and rapids) and we developed a recurring melodic theme and remixed to suit each mood. We completed over 70 minutes of original music. It was a bit of a dry-run for some of our later movie work."

Apollo 440 believe it's good to extend yourself creatively and, in a different context, this also means that the whole focus of its work has had to change. "It's all about not getting in the way of the action," says Noko. "While enhancing it and not letting the pace drop. You can't have too many breakdowns and intro-builds are incredibly quick to be compared to regular album 'envelopes'."

There are downsides to game soundtracks, however. Noko claims: "They've now begun to be seen as yet another marketing outlet for THE MAN to shove crap compilations down our throats with the same old tracks cropping up again and again."

Noko is more upbeat when contemplating the future, because of the increase in advanced technology, 5.1 speaker systems, big monitors, etc, he says: "The music almost has to be 70mm movie-dynamics standard. In the old days it was just 'crank it up and compress it to buggery' to make it 'kick' on a 12in mono portable!"

Apollo 440: game soundtracks are a whole new adventure for these guys.



PHOTO: Peter Anderson

and precludes anything but a very general evolution of the audio. What this means is that you may be hearing frenetic music while hovering over an area of the dungeon where there is no action."

More generally, Russell Shaw dislikes those games that require

❖ **Speaking as a gamer. I'm not going to buy FIFA just because it has Chumbawumba on it** ❖

no musical thought whatsoever. "Rather than decide which band or dance track we are going to commission for a fighting or driving game, etc. I would much rather prefer to work on something that requires a fully interactive music score that immerses you into the world you are looking at on screen."

Pat Spender, audio producer for independent audio outfit Matinee, speaks our sort of language. He declares that the worst games to work on: "Are those that never get published!" ☑



Lionhead's Russell Shaw won't be allowing Westlife into the studio.



EA's Nick Laviers, takes his music pretty seriously.



Popular music hasn't hurt the FIFA series.

MUSIC TO COME

New and future titles are utilising new sound technology and advanced techniques...

GANGSTERS 2

Hothouse/Eidos

With *Gangsters 2*, the sequel to the 1998 hit *Gangsters: Organised Crime*, Hothouse has achieved a moody, event-activated soundtrack. The basic idea to the in-game sound is similar to that used in films and is beginning to emerge within games, as Graeme Monk, senior producer at Eidos, explains: "The music is there to affect the user's mood or give them hints on something that is happening or about to occur. The brief for the musical score was to achieve an epic film track and I believe that they have achieved this quite successfully."

STARTOPIA

Mucky Foot/Eidos

In *Startopia* you take the role of an administrator responsible for renovating war-torn space stations. Each space station can have up to three levels, there is an 'environmental' track for each deck and each facility that is placed on a deck has its own sound effects. Graeme Monk explains: "As the user has direct control of the camera they can move in to any individual facility or alien as they wish, which means the sound engine needs to be capable of supplying different effects and music in full 3D. So it's possible to be up near the roof of the deck with all the air conditioning units humming away and then fly the camera down to the disco and join the aliens bopping away to their favourite interstellar dance track. The effects emanating from the Lavotron I will leave to your imagination..."

BLACK & WHITE

Lionhead/EA

Black & White uses music in many ways. Russell Shaw, head of sound and music at Lionhead, explains: "Firstly, it tells you what region of the landscape you are flying over, which tribes are nearby and how good or evil they are. Then it gives depth and feeling to the different script stories that play a part in the stage of the game. Also, some of the challenges are musical in themselves so, without the music the challenges would be meaningless. I put a tremendous amount of thought into the music for *Black & White*. Both the technology side and the design side."

PRISONER OF WAR

Codemasters

Wide Sounds is currently working on the soundtrack for this game. Set in WWII POW camps, the soundtrack will be reminiscent of the classic war movies of the '50s and '60s. This presents its own particular challenges as it requires an orchestral score. "Most of the source material is being composed by film and TV composer Christopher Slaski," says Ciaran Walsh, creative director of Wide Sounds, who's worked with composers of the stature of Ennio Morricone. "He delivers chunks of the score as MIDI files and samples, at which point I take over and turn the raw materials into DirectMusic components, which allows me to dynamically recombine elements from different parts of the score (eg character motifs or gameplay related cues), perfectly mapped to fit the music playing at the time."

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

Elixir/Eidos

Featuring the work of Audio Interactive, *Republic: The Revolution*, has had some rather intriguing problems. Richard Joseph who has worked on the game explains: "The game requires convincing city ambience, together with pedestrians who talk to each other and cars that pass, turn and stop. Making a city sound 'real' is difficult enough as it is, but we also have to consider the audio from a more cinematic point of view, where the sound must be focused on the subject and not get lost among all the sounds going on around it." It's a job for an illusionist by the sound of it



Get ready for some moody gangster type tunes.



Ahhh, the sweet sounds of alien life forms.



A whole lot of thought has gone into B&W's soundtrack.

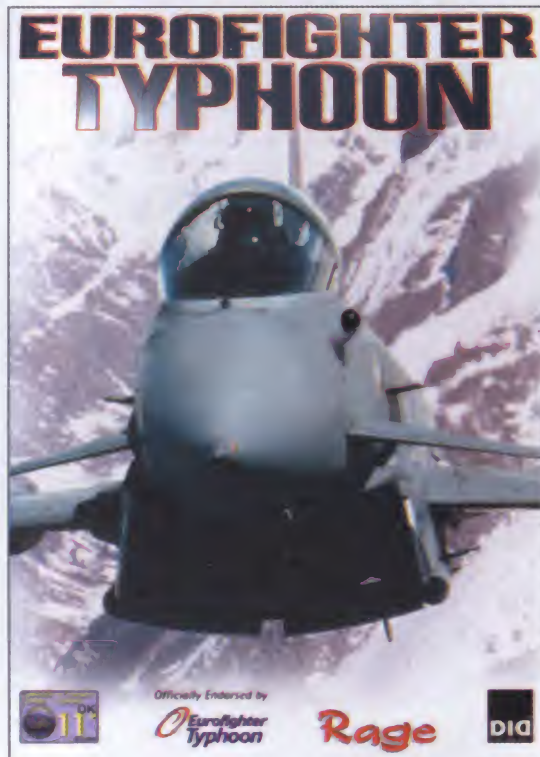


A classic war film soundtrack is on they way for POW.



Capturing the noises of the city is the aim for Republic.

FLY LIKE THE WIND



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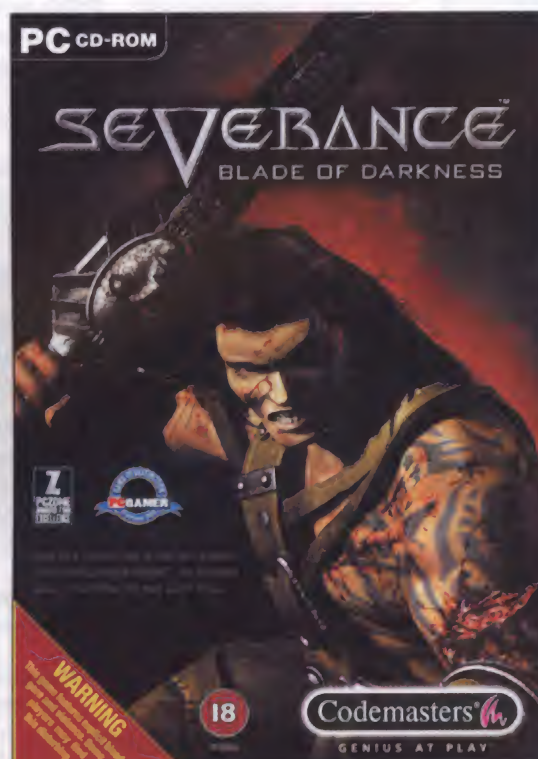
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PHONE CHEATS

☎ CALLING IN Martin Korda



As you may or may not have noticed, it has been somewhat pricey to call our Tips Line recently, £1.50 a minute to be precise. I'm guessing that

unless you're reading this mag in a straitjacket you're probably sane enough to know that this is a lot of cash to pay for a hint. However, all that's about to change, as we've now got our very own in-house Tips Line, run by a group of guys called The Masters (a reassuring name I'm sure you'll agree).

These boys know their stuff, so if you're stumped, stuck or just plain crap at games, you can give them a call and ask for a helping hand. And it will only cost the price of a national call. Now you can't say fairer than that, can you?

The lines are open Monday to Friday from 3.30pm until 6.30pm, so you shouldn't have any problems getting through. If you don't want to use the phone you can e-mail your queries and just sit back and wait for a prompt response. You get great advice at an affordable price, and those of you who don't pay the bills will avoid horrific retribution from those who do.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

122 CHEAT MASTER

Every cheat's best friend, Keith Pullin, does his best to help you get ahead.

123 DEAR KEITH

Uncle Keith comes up with the answers to all your gaming gripes.

124 DEAR WANDY

Need to find a solution to a niggling technical pain? Our resident techie Wandy is here to help.

126 WATCHDOG

Have you got a problem with a company? Let us know and we'll get Adam Phillips to sort 'em out for you.

129 SITES FOR SORE EYES

Why waste your time trawling through pages and pages of useless stuff on the Internet, when you can just let us find the good stuff for you?

YOUR HOSTS



Adam Phillips



Keith Pullin



Phil Wand

CHEATMAS

Tuck into our monthly collection of gaming spoils

★ BIG CHEAT Keith Pullin

NEED HELP?

If your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/Cheat Master, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with Dear Keith or Cheat Master in the subject line.

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS CDV

While playing the game press 'Enter' and then type one of these cheats:

supervizor Toggle fog of war on/off
money Top up resources
izmena Switch player with numpad keys 1-9
multivar Press 'P' to get all units

THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON Eidos Interactive

Hit 'Enter' and then type any of these codes:

!om+god! God mode (unit must be selected)
!om+win! Win level
!om+godblessovermax! All generals max level and add resources
!om+fog! Show map
!obj+gold! Give gold
!obj+timber! Give lumber
!obj+rawmeat! Give meat
!obj+corn! Give corn

!obj+food! Give food
!obj+iron! Give iron
!obj+wine! Give wine
!obj+all! Give all
!om+speed! Speed-up game

THE MOON PROJECT Games Studios

Type these codes during the game:

Cheater 1 Activate cheat mode
mybrainisfaster 1 Fast research
beautifulmoon 1 Show map
limit_up x Increase unit limit to x
moneyfornothing x Increase credits to x
byebye Lose level
shower Lightning rain
hotground Place mines

EUROPA UNIVERSALIS Koch Distribution

Press F12 during the game to bring up the console and then get typing:

Difrules God mode
Richelleu Control all military units
Pappenheim Toggle fog of war
Columbus Explore all provinces
Gustavus Increase land technology
Drake Increase naval technology
Cromwell Increase infrastructure

Polo Increases trade
Oranje Set stability to +3
Cortez Eliminate natives
Alba Eliminate revolts
Tilly No wars
Montezuma +50000 Ducats
Pocahontas +10 colonists
Dagama +10 merchants
Swift Add 10000 population to capital province

Peterthegreat Troop limits
Russianhordes More cannon fodder
Vatican +10 diplomats
Shogun Close Japan
luther Triggers effects of Reformation
calvin Triggers effects of John Calvin
trent Triggers effects of Council of Trent
event [x] Trigger event [x], where x is one of the following numbers:

- 1 Revolt in random province
- 2 Revolt in random colony
- 3 Religious revolution
- 7 Religion
- 8 Heretics
- 9 Death
- 10 Excellent
- 11 Insanity
- 12 Scandal
- 13 Gift
- 14 Gold lost
- 15 Obscurantism
- 16 Except year
- 17 Colonist
- 18 Demand

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

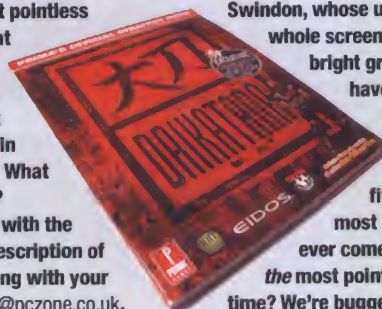
So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the PC ZONE prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk. Make sure you include all your correct details,

so if you do win, we know where to send your special prize (see below). Well done to this month's winner, Steven Theobald from

Swindon, whose useless cheat makes the whole screen in *Urban Chaos* turn bright green. To do this, all you have to do is press 'F9', type in 'BANGUNSNOTGAMES' followed by 'CCTV'.

What could be a more fitting prize for one of the most pointless cheats we've ever come across than a copy of the most pointless strategy guide of all time? We're buggered if we know. So here you go Steven, enjoy.



MASTER



- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 20 Bank | 49 Deflation |
| 21 Stock exchange | 50 Diplomatic insult |
| 22 Company of trade | 51 Favoured trade nation |
| 23 Port closure | 52 Industrial development |
| 24 Diplomacy | 53 New centre of trade |
| 25 Pressure | 54 Trade restrictions |
| 26 Col Dyn | 55 Fortification |
| 27 Inventions | 56 Explorer |
| 28 Merchants | 57 Conquistador |
| 29 Stolen sea charts | |
| 30 Plague | |
| 31 Naval disaster | |
| 32 Desertion | |
| 33 Land technology | |
| 34 Naval technology | |
| 35 Enthusiastic army | |
| 36 Enthusiastic navy | |
| 37 Annex | |
| 38 Agriculture | |
| 39 Fire | |
| 40 Good Government | |
| 41 Poor Government | |
| 42 Unhappy Clergy | |
| 43 Unhappy Artisans | |
| 44 Unhappy Peasants | |
| 45 Unhappy Merchant | |
| 46 Mineral | |
| 47 Crisis | |
| 48 Corruption | |

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING Electronic Arts

Hit Tab to open the chat window, and then type in any one of the following bloodcurdling cheats:

addall Get all weapons and spells

set aeons.patrick health 999
Add 999 to health (NB. If your health is over 100 the main monsters will not attack, so set health back to 100 before confronting bosses.)

set aeons.patrick mana 999
Add 999 to mana
ampattspell Increase level of selected spell
flight Fly

infiniteMana 1 Unlimited mana (0=off)
becomeLight 1 Give light (0=off)
showfps Show frame rate
behindview 1 Third-person view
assall Create donkey

And if you'd like some really special tips, here are a few which will give you an even greater advantage...

• To locate the firing range start the game, walk into the house and get the short tour from the maid. Afterwards walk to the end of the hall towards the door that has two square panels near the top. Shoot these and the door should open. Within is your firing range.

• To find the mini-theatre hit Tab and type 'Open Manor_EntranceHall_FromKitch'. When the new level has loaded, head towards the paintings on the left and jump to try and reach the top of the two outermost paintings. You will hear a click and a show will start up...

• To see a giant marshmallow sheep press 'Tab' and then type 'Open Monastery_Present_Cove'. Play through this level until you have jumped into the ruined building from the barn. Go to the top floor and look

for a plank that points towards the farm (where the howlers were jumping around when you first entered the building). Jump up and down at the end of the plank and prepare yourself.

• Hit 'Tab' and then type 'Open Oneiros_HowlingWell'. Fly up to the big building, walk in and go down the stairs. Look for a square button on the wall near the purple force field. Push the button and go back outside. Fly up onto the roof of the building and scry – watch out for a purple haze. When you see it, fly towards it for a funky disco sensation...

• For a good time press 'Tab' and type 'Open Manor_Entrancehall_night_ReturnFromCove'. Walk through the first set of doors and turn left – a maid appears. Talk to her, follow her and hang around for a while... [K2]



☹ Looks like you're in desperate need of a manicure.

DEAR KEITH

The beautiful and benevolent *Keith Pullin* solves your gaming woes

SHADOWY ARSE, NEED A LIFT?

Q I'm playing the absolutely amazing *Giants: Citizen Kabuto* but I have come to a rather odd level. My problem is simple; I can't get up the side of the mountain to reach the village. My jetpack seems to run

out all the time and I end up running (or flying) around in circles. How do I get up there? Please help me because I really want to get further.

Peter Black, Dumfrice

A OK, if it's the level I think you're on you must head to the other side of the mountain and zoom up the cliff there. You can just make it if you're in the right spot. Watch out when you get to the top though, because all hell will break loose...

SHUT UP!

Q I know you always try to cover at least one really old game, so hopefully this month you will help me on *Grim Fandango*. The problem I have is trying to get Glotis to leave the Cat Track. Whatever I try, the big fat lump just doesn't want to move. How do I get him out? Please help.

David Lamb, Falmouth

A Glotis won't leave the track unless you get the club shut down. Go up to your office and use your desk to bring up the roulette system. When the red light is on for the wheel on the far right,

use the magnet to make the ball land on a different number. Bogan will shut down the club. At this point Glotis will get thrown out too, and you can continue your journey onwards.

WHIPPERS

Q I'm playing *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn* and I've reached a really annoying bit. I'm trying to kill the slave trader who cursed Jaheira, but he summons three mage assassins to help him. They quickly whip my arse and my entire party dies. I've had this problem for about a week now and it's thoroughly pissing me off. Please help me, you really are my last hope.

Alan Russell, Parkstone

A Yes, that part of the game can be tricky. My advice is this: first kill the mage on the far right of the screen because he throws out confusion spells and they can really mess things up for you. Next, go for the mage who conjures up the big fella with the axe, because he can also wreak havoc. After that go for the remaining mage and

then kill the slaver. With any luck, that should do the job. If this doesn't work, go off somewhere, get some experience to gain a level or two and then try again.

FLASH GIT

Q I have a problem with flash bombs. When using them on *SWAT 3* and *Project IGI* I can't seem to protect myself from their blinding effects. I am sure in real life you would close your eyes or something. I have yet to locate anything like a 'close eyes' button on either game and consequently I end up stumbling about blindly with the terrorists whenever I use this otherwise effective bit of kit. What do I have to do to keep my eyesight?

Chris Undritz, email

A Why don't you just throw them and then run away or hide round a corner or something? Since when do SAS or SWAT teams stand in the middle of a firefight with their eyes shut anyway? Honestly, use that big fleshy mass inside your skull for once in your life eh.

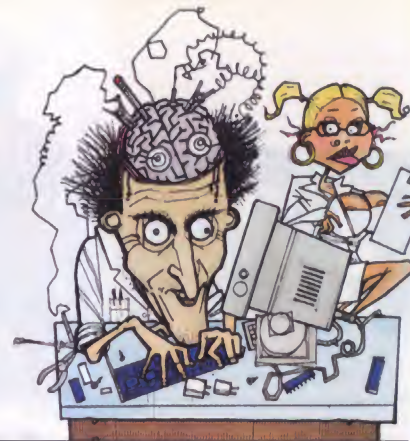


Run all the way around to the other side of the hill and climb up there.

DEAR WANDY

More dead hardware, sluggish modems and ineffectual video cards?
Is there not a fully functional PC in the land?

★ WIZARD Phil Wand



GOT A QUERY, DEARY?

Send us a query or a top tip and you could pocket £50.

Share your techie or gaming-related problems with us, and we, in turn, may well share it with thousands of readers via these very pages in a big communal love-in-type-thing. And as an extra incentive, we're offering a cool £50 to the reader who sends in the most interesting query or toppest tip every month. No, really. Send as much relevant information as you can.

WRITE TO Dear Wandy, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Address your letters to us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading 'Dear Wandy'.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read every techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone. Thanks.

NEED FOR 3D

Q I am relatively new to PCs, so please forgive my ignorance. I've just bought a Pentium III 750MHz 128Mb RAM with a 30Gb hard drive. I have an on-board Intel 82815 chipset, and an AGP 4x slot with a AC97 on-board sound card. I am also using Windows 98 ME as my operating system.

Anyway, overall I am impressed with it, apart from the speed of gameplay. I have been playing *Deus Ex*, *Vampire* and *The Sims*. They all run fine, albeit in low resolutions, and when there is a lot of activity on screen they pretty much slow to a halt.

Now, I'm not sure if the graphics adaptor I have is 3D accelerated or not, and if not, will I be able to upgrade to a proper 3D card? I have been recommended a GeForce2, will this work in my system?

Please help, as I hope I haven't bought a PC that I can't upgrade because the graphics and sound are on-board.

Brett Parks

A The 82815 chipset is Intel's 'integrated everything' chip. It contains video, sound, network, four USB slots and a soft modem, all in one. Pretty impressive, and it makes the whole PC far cheaper. The video, although fine for regular Windows use, is not up to 3D games. Luckily,

the 82815 chipset doesn't mind being told to shut up and get lost, so you can simply add decent 3D hardware, such as the NVIDIA GeForce2 card you mention, and in no time at all the polygons should be flying around your games as though they were covered in jelly.

If you intend to play online games, you may wish to upgrade from the built in soft modem too. A soft modem uses the CPU to do some of its work, and will thus introduce lag, which a dedicated hardware device won't suffer from. Check out issue #101 for our feature on playing games online.

REINSTALL MY SON

Q I currently have an AMD K6/2-500 with 128Mb RAM, 30Gb HDD, 32Mb AGP Graphics card, running Windows 98. I am thinking of upgrading the processor or motherboard. A friend has told me that if I change my motherboard, I will need to reinstall Windows. Does this mean that I will also need to reinstall all the games and utilities that are currently on my hard drive – major pain in the arseville – or when Windows reinstalls will it simply use the old registry and configuration settings?

James

A Speaking in general terms, your friend is correct. A new motherboard will inevitably have a newer chipset, and will thus require different drivers. If the old drivers are still about, there is a chance your machine will either not get into Windows, or if it does, it might run a bit on the slow side, or play up something chronic.

Having said that, there is nothing to lose by trying it. So suck it and see: back up everything crucial, then replace the main board and boot into Windows Safe Mode (press F8 when your machine starts up to get a list of options). Once in Safe Mode, right-click on the My Computer icon and select Properties from the pop-up menu that appears. Go through the list of devices shown on the tree and delete them all. Then reboot the machine and let it

is something I enjoy – I was getting average pings of around 700ms.

My mum agreed to a change of ISP and I now use BT Surftime, but after a month I noticed that it's actually not much better. Although I connect first time, every time, after about 10 minutes I'm often disconnected, and when downloading, my maximum rate tends to be 2.3Kb/s whereas on FreeServe it was always near the 4Kb/s mark. A friend of mine also has BT Surftime, but he has none of these problems. Can you please tell me what is wrong?

Simon Appleton

A The world of modems can be a pain in the bum. They can be slow for several reasons: 1) The server you are connecting to is just plain busy. 2) The ISP you're using has subscribed too many accounts for the bandwidth they have. This is quite common. The

“Although I connect first time every time, after about 10 minutes I get disconnected”

SIMON APPLETON, ON HIS DISAPPOINTING BT INTERNET CONNECTION

fire up Windows normally. Double check the list of devices again, and if anything flags as being 'faulty' (ie there's a little yellow warning triangle alongside it), delete it.

As I said, sometimes this works, sometimes it doesn't. I've managed it on a number of occasions with both Windows 95 and Windows 2000, but there's no guarantee. Having said all that, Windows 98 is a terrible housekeeper, and leaves a serious amount of junk and nonsense sitting idly in the registry. So a full reinstall is often a good move.

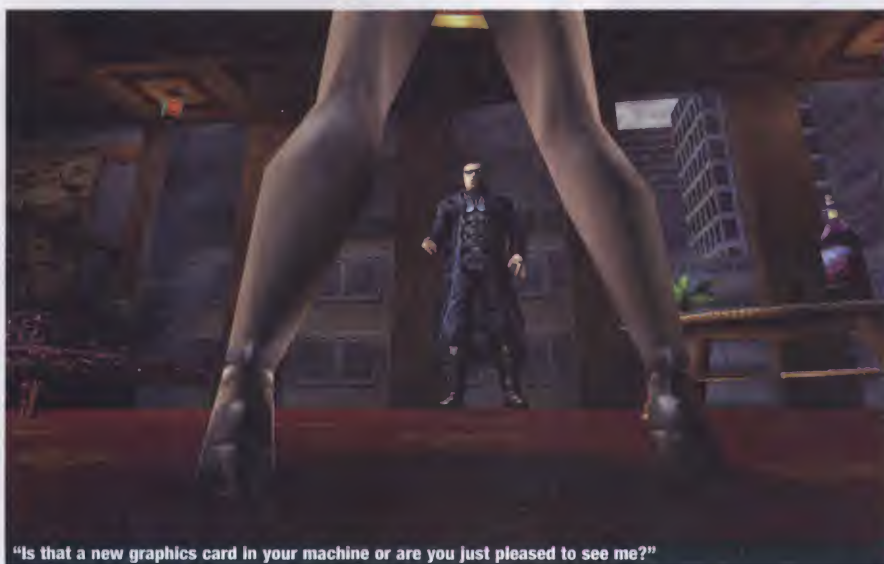
SURF'S DOWN

Q Having been a previous user of the FreeServe Surftime package, I changed to BT because the FreeServe service was appalling. I had to wait for more than an hour once, just trying to connect over and over again – and still I didn't get on the Net. As for playing games online – which

ISP has to pay for additional bandwidth, so the more people they can squeeze down existing wires, the better. 3) Your phone line is either too noisy or too quiet, and the ISP's modem is having to error correct the data it receives from you, or it continually requests that it be sent again. If you have an external modem, check for an error correction light on the front, as it'll show you if this is happening.

From what you describe, it looks as though it could be the last issue. I've seen many a machine connect fine to one ISP, and run fast, yet it suffers drops and error correction problems all the time to another. All on the same telephone line.

If you have a lot of phones plugged into the same line, removing a few of these will reduce the load on the line and in turn make the signal clearer. If this doesn't work, ring BT





◎ Crossover cables are available from all decent computer stores.

and ask them to increase the gain on your phone line: the maximum is four. Basically, they crank the volume up to your house, which results in the modem chatter becoming far louder and less upset by the hiss and crackle.

LAN FRAGGER

Q We have two computers at home, a Pentium II 450 and an AMD Athlon 700. I want to get them linked under the guise of transferring data quickly, but what I really want to do is play network games without ringing up a gargantuan phone bill. Would a LAN be the easiest and cheapest route? I know there is something called a null serial cable, but do most games (ie *Close Combat 3*, *Counter-Strike*, *AOE*) support this? Both have a PCI slot free.

Brian Cavanagh

A Some games will work via a null modem serial cable, but this can be a bit awkward for others. My guess is that most multiplayer games released within the last year or so won't. If you can stretch to a couple of 100Mbit network cards (no more than £15 each), you can then link them with a reversed twisted pair network cable, more commonly known as a crossover cable. Please note that this is not a normal network cable, but a special one designed for linking network hubs or switches together. In effect, you will have a small, fast, local area network, and be able to take advantage of all the network features of Windows: so you can share printers and files, as well as taking part in late night fragging sessions.

HMMMMMMMMMM

Q I'm in some horrible trouble with my beloved computer. I am experiencing some major sound troubles. If I play any kind of sound from my PC – from MP3s to game music – it plays for about ten seconds, and then emits this strange humming noise, totally eliminating the sound through the speakers.

It all happened when I tried to have one of those online conversations over MSN Messenger. I tried to connect with someone and it started making this awful noise. And

it's been the same ever since.

I have an Intel Celeron, 95Mb RAM, and what appears to be a Creative Sound Blaster 64, although I can't confirm that as it's my dad's computer. I use a Ghetto Blaster type thing as my speakers.

John Paul Quigley

A It doesn't sound good – no pun intended. Although it seems like you have a dead sound card inside your father's PC, there are a couple of things to try before heading off to the shops though. First, turn the volume down low and try plugging a pair of walkman-style headphones directly into the sound card. If these work and the hum has gone, hooray. Your sound card is OK, so you can breath a sigh of relief and check or replace the cable to the Ghetto Blaster. If you're using the speaker-out from the sound card and line-in on the stereo, drop the volume on the PC. Speaker-outs and line-ins are not designed to work together, although they often do. If the Walkman headphones don't solve things, try removing the sound card and then slotting it back into place. If you know how, you could also reinstall the drivers using the driver disk, but if you get to this stage, to be honest, you'll be clutching at straws. Vaguely good news, a replacement Sound Blaster 128 is less than £20.

F*\$@%

Q Are they going to make a *Grand Theft Auto 3* for younger children? Because my mother will not let me buy any 18 rated games – I'm 14. I'm sure the game will sell much better if they make a child-friendly version of it.

James Jones

A I'm afraid they won't be bringing out a version of *GTA* suitable for a younger audience. The very foundation of the game – steal cars, shoot people, squash pedestrians etc – is too adult a concept to squeeze past the ratings people. You'll simply have to wait, in the same way you'll have to wait to drive a car. It's certainly a little absurd, in that you can watch violent cartoons, but you can't go and buy a game like *GTA*. Soon they'll be restricting the sale of *Jelly Babies*, in order to prevent kids biting people's heads off when they get older. **PCZ**

PCZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

Code wasn't quite ready in time for a review this issue, but we've just spoken to Codemasters and we've been assured that barring any last minute disasters we're going to have finished review code in a couple of weeks. If this happens we're going to have the exclusive first review, as usual.

THREE EXCLUSIVE REVIEWS!

But that's not all. As well as *Operation Flashpoint* you can expect to see exclusive reviews of the new shocker from Infogrames, *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare*, along with the same companies stunning new take on space combat, *Edge of Chaos: Independence War 2*. And, we'll have the first full review of Elsa's GeForce 3 card – nVidia has finally approved the drivers, and we've heard there's an imminent price drop as well. Could be worth re-mortgaging for.

FOUR EXCLUSIVE DEMOS!

We've got four massive exclusive demos lined up for you next month along with the usual array of mods, maps, patches and general gaming trickery. The things you won't see anywhere else include *Magic & Mayhem: The Art Of Magic*, *Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura*, *Edge Of Chaos: I-War 2* and *Tribes 2*.

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS

The biggest games show of the year, E3, kicks off in May and we're going to be there to bring you the low-down on the biggest games of next year. Expect to see brand new screenshots and info on *Homeworld 2*, *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and many others, including (possibly) *Duke Nukem Forever*. Knowing his track though he won't show up.

ON SALE THURSDAY MAY 31

WATCHDOG

The software industry can be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let **PC ZONE** ram raid their premises for you and snatch some answers

MR FIX-IT Adam Phillips



LIVING IN A WORLD O' HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line.

WRITE TO Watchdog, PC ZONE, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL Alternatively, email us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading Watchdog

SMALL PRINT

Q I am writing to you in the hope of passing on a major beef I have with BT's ADSL service, to any of your readers who may have it or are about to have it installed. I had the service for around two months until I recently moved house. I was extremely happy with my low ping and high scores at *Quake III*.

If you decide to stay at your previous address for 12 months then there's no problem with the service. However, if you decide to move house, the problems begin. After informing BT I was moving, I was stiffly told that my ADSL line could not be transferred. Funny that my phone line can be.

I was told that I was breaking my contract (which I never saw), and that I would have to continue paying BT £39.99 for the remainder of my contract – a remaining nine months (£360) – for a service I have no access to. However, it was perfectly OK to re-order the service if I didn't mind paying another installation

is actually connected remotely at the exchange and the engineer just tests it. It's that simple.

Gary Jarvis

A The things we go through to get better online gaming. Anyway, over to BT: "ADSL is an impressive technology," it reckons. "It can squeeze hitherto unheard of

engineering work at both the exchange and in the customer's premises. "Hence the reason why the cost of providing ADSL is high compared with, say, a PSTN line," says BT. "To spread installation costs to customers, we charge on the basis of an installation fee and a 12-month minimum contract. This tariffing basis is common in similar products such as ISDN and indeed mobile phones.

BT says that they make it clear in their terms and conditions that customers are entering a 12-month minimum contract period and BT accepts orders on this basis: "A customer moving house within 12 months of having BTOpenworld broadband installed will be required to pay installation and subsequent monthly charges at the new house, and the balance of the 12

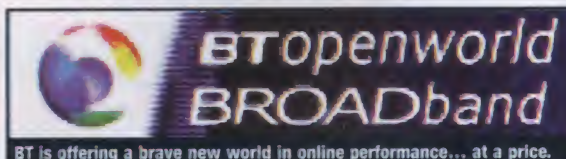
"BT told me that I was breaking my contract (which I never saw), and that I would have to continue paying them £39.99 a month"

GARY JARVIS, PAYING FOR AN ADSL LINE HE DOESN'T HAVE

fee, plus £39.99 a month for another one-year contract. I made it quite clear that I still wanted the service but just wanted it moved to my new address – as I already had the bits, I didn't see it as a major problem. The service runs off your existing phone line and involves little more than an engineer to fit a new box. The line

amounts of data down copper lines, which were only ever designed to carry voice traffic. However, such technology comes at a cost..."

It says that BTOpenworld broadband requires an ADSL telephone line, the installation of which is "a complex and expensive task," requiring



BT is offering a brave new world in online performance... at a price.

NTL BLUNDER

NTL nick BT customers only to take the...

Q My tale of woe begins in September 1999 when I wanted a phone installed in my new abode in Leicester. Being a computer geek, I wanted a fast connection – this meant going for the recently launched BT Homehighway. Yes, it's expensive but I'm an 'early adopter' and therefore one of those sought-after consumers. But after attending a local computer fair, I was leapt upon by a NTL salesperson who promised me that cable modems were to be launched in Leicester in November.

I then checked the NTL website, and the launch date for Leicester was the last quarter of 1999. "Whoopie!" I thought. 'Cutting-edge technology, cheaper than ISDN, and coming soon.' So I promptly had a cable phone installed. The last quarter came and went though, and the date on the website changed to the first quarter of 2000. "Ho hum, must be teething problems, won't be much longer," I thought. The first quarter came and went, and the website then updated the timeline to the second quarter. I was starting to get a little annoyed. The second quarter came and went as did the third quarter. I was now

thoroughly peeved and, after a little digging, found that NTL hadn't even finished building the servers and premises that were required for cable modems.

They lied to me. Actively and maliciously lied to me to retain a share of the 'early adopters' market that would have normally taken up BT's offer of HomeHighway. Well, the good news is that in December 2000, cable modems were launched in Leicester – more than a year later than advertised. The bad news is that even though I'm close to the city centre, my street has old equipment installed and according to an off-the-record

conversation with NTL, a proposed upgrade hasn't even been laid down for my street yet.

All I'm asking for from NTL is an apology and most importantly, an admission of using false advertising to retain customers.

Jamie Morgan

A That's the problem with being an 'early adopter' – you have to put up with all the delays and teething problems that the mainstream consumer doesn't. They happily wait in a couple of years later when most problems have usually been ironed out.

Services may vary from area to area, please call customer services for the exact products and services that you can receive in your area.



click

This is what NTL says on its website. But it was useless to Jamie.

In the meantime, NTL offered the following: "At the time that Mr Morgan attended his local computer fair, trials of our broadband service were taking place within our Surrey and Hants franchise," says a spokesperson for the company. "Due to the success of these trials, it was predicted that it would only be a short period of time before the service could be rolled out to customers across the country."

According to NTL, due to an unforeseen technical difficulty "it has proved much harder to roll out the service in our more recently acquired franchises. This includes the ex-Diamond cable franchise that Mr Morgan lives in."

NTL says it will contact you directly to discuss the provision of the service to your home. In the meantime, it stated: "We are sorry for the frustrations Mr Morgan has suffered from being unable to take advantage of our broadband Internet service and wish to reassure him that at no time were we trying to misguide our customers."

months' subscription charges from the old premises."

And that's it, Gary. It's a shame that BT can't be more forgiving with their terms. Our main concern is that you say you never saw the contract, but BT says it is made clear in its terms and conditions. The question we have is: did you ever receive a copy of those terms and conditions? Please let us know.

OPPOSING GAMEPLAY

Q I have a complaint about Gameplay. I placed an order over the phone for a PlayStation game for my son. As it was more than £9.99, it allowed me to choose from the list of bargain PC titles for 99p advertised in the January sales brochure. I wanted *Unreal* but it was out of stock, so I enquired as to what the *Half-Life* add-on was. I was told it was *Opposing Force*. Obviously I was surprised by such an incredible bargain, so I went ahead and immediately ordered it.

When the order details were confirmed, I was told that a P&P charge was applicable – contrary to what it said in the brochure. When the order arrived, the bargain of the century turned out to be no more than the *Half-Life*

☎ "Where's Tim's fugging order?" Watchdog pays Gameplay a visit...

goodies that are freely available off the Net or your cover discs. On contacting the after-sales department, I was refunded the P&P cost, which they admitted wasn't applicable to my order, but was told they could not honour the agreement on *Opposing Force*.

I was promised a copy of *Unreal*, which after phone calls to enquire about its whereabouts, has still not materialised. Can you please help?

Tim Williams

A So what's going on, Gameplay? Dastardly double-dealings or a customer sales cock-up? "Mr Williams originally placed his order from our January sales catalogue," offers a spokesperson for Gameplay. "On page two of the catalogue, we offered a list of PC titles at £0.99 subject to spending a minimum of £9.99. When Mr Williams placed his order, he requested a copy of a *Half-Life* add-on as his choice from the £0.99 games. In the ad it states *Half-Life* add-on but does not specify that it is *Opposing Force*. When he questioned the operative, he was informed that it was *Opposing Force*."

Gameplay says you were misinformed by the operative and incorrectly invoiced: "Once the operative realised his errors, he did endeavour to rectify the problems immediately. Because of the misinformation concerning the *Half-Life* add-on, Mr Williams was offered a copy of *Unreal* from the £0.99 list of games. Unfortunately,

this version is currently unavailable."

Concerning the charge for postage and packing, Gameplay says as soon as it realised its mistake, it corrected the problem and refunded your card. Gameplay says it's relayed apologies to you for "the inconvenience and frustration this matter has caused," and has sent out copies of *Best Of Unreal* and *Opposing Force* as a gesture of goodwill.

Gameplay concludes by saying: "Mr Williams seems happy with the way we have resolved this matter and we have taken steps to ensure that such an incident does not happen again."

LACK OF INSIGHT

Q I ordered a Radeon 32Mb DDR Retail from Insight on February 9 this year. When a parcel arrived, it contained three inkjet cartridges and an order form for somewhere in Llandudno. I rang Insight and was told the cartridges would be picked up and a new card shipped to me.

The next day the cartridges were picked up from me. Nothing was heard from them for a week so I decided to ring them. After being put on hold for 20 minutes I was told that Insight's policy was not to ship me another card but to refund my money – I could then purchase another one from them which would take about a week.

So after another four days of waiting, I was told that my order (which was sent to Llandudno) had been returned to a different



warehouse and that I would have to wait for them to issue the correct warehouse with credit, and that this would then be passed on to me. I was told it would be actioned on Monday 27 February.

I rang again today and was told it is still pending. I feel I have given Insight more than enough time to sort this out. I am annoyed that they have had my money for three weeks and I still have not got my card. I now want a full refund as I have seen the 64Mb card cheaper elsewhere, but I can't afford to buy it until I get my refund!

Rob Baker

A We sent the complaint to Insight and gave them five working days to answer the

☎ Order the latest graphics card and it could be obsolete.

complaint. At the eleventh hour, we received the following response from a bod in customer services: "I have investigated the circumstances surrounding this complaint and, having spoken to Mr Baker personally, he has assured me that the issue has now been resolved to his complete satisfaction."

This is all fine and dandy, and we're glad that Rob has been sorted out, but Watchdog would still like an explanation as to why it took more than three weeks for his problem to be rectified. Never mind... ☎

READ ME!

If you are writing in to complain about a product, please supply us with your full name, address and contact number. With PCs, make sure that you also include all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers. It means we can resolve your problems much quicker.



Unreal for 99p? Bargain. But wouldn't you prefer Opposing Force?

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SITES FOR SORE EYES

We track down the websites you should head to for a bit of online assistance

★ **LOOKING AROUND** James Lyon

If you've finished a game it's only natural you should help out your fellow gamers by letting them walk safely through the path you've followed. Either that or you just want to gloat that you're better than everyone else and show them how you did what no one else could first. You bastard.

HALF-LIFE

★ **Issue #71 Score 95%**
<http://www.half-life.net/half-life/walkthrough/>

A thoroughly detailed site for all things *Half-Life* related. This is about as professional and slick as you're going to get; think of it as the walkthrough equivalent of having lithe young models rubbing your naked body with coconut oil. As opposed to the text FAQ: the walkthrough equivalent of Anne Robinson and a jar of Marmite.



ⓘ *Half-Life*: will there ever be an equal?

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

★ **Issue #79 Score 90%**
<http://www.hidden-and-dangerous.co.uk/walkthrough.htm>

This neat little guide is in at number two with a bullet. No extraneous details, but split up into campaigns for easy access. Also includes help for the mission pack, *Fight For Freedom*. So if you haven't completed it yet, rest assured that you'll find all the answers here.



ⓘ Two soldiers and a car. Obviously.



Vampire: at least the graphics don't suck.

VAMPIRE

★ **Issue #92 Score 89%**
<http://www.themasquerade.org/info/gameguide.shtml>
<http://camarilla.bizland.com/strategy.htm>

Stick on the Sisters Of Mercy because here comes every Goth's favourite game. If you're too busy painting your fingernails black, drinking cider and invoking the powers of Satan you may need help. Well... the first one is billed as a guide not a walkthrough, so don't expect too much in the way of puzzle help. The second one is unfinished, but does contain a few helpful tips for multiplayer as well.

FALLOUT 2

Issue #71 Score 79%
 ★ <http://www.fallout2.net/faqlist.shtml>
<http://www.rpgplanet.com/fallout/fallout2/help/sheik/contents.shtml>

This one reminds me of a great little film: *A Boy And His Dog*; a post-apocalyptic journey of, quite literally, a boy and his talking dog with a twist ending on a par with *Seven* and *Fight Club* if you're interested. And the guide? A detailed text-only FAQ.



ⓘ And people can see each other in the dark.

RETURN TO KRONDOR

★ **Issue #76 Score 80%**
http://www.abby-cheat.com/html/walks/walkthroughs/Return_to_Krondor.htm

Return To Krondor, address unknown. No such number, no such zone. Elvis always knew he'd have a hit on his hands singing about this fantasy RPG. If he was still alive, the King could have worked some magic on this walkthrough. A few separating headers would make it a lot better. Quite detailed, though.



ⓘ "Man, that's the last time we stop off for duty-free."

METAL FATIGUE

★ **Issue #92 Score 58%**
http://www.gamefaqs.com/computer/doswin/file/metal_fatigue.txt

Talonsoft thought it would be onto a winner with this combination of big robots and RTS action. Unfortunately, they were wrong, but thanks to the wonders of the Net there are still some fansites that are willing to help you out. This one takes a look at the units and some general tips to help you along.



ⓘ Robot wars (without the balding, cardigan-clad metalwork teachers).

PROJECT IGI

★ **Issue #97 Score 85%**
http://www.rapids-tweaks.co.uk/igi_walkthrough.htm
<http://systemlogic.neoseeker.com/resourceLink.html?rId=29550>

Social evil, a sniper rifle and a Welshman. Not the next episode of *The Weakest Link*, it's *Project IGI*. No mid-mission save games mean you're going to get more than a little frustrated after a while. These two walkthroughs are about as good as each other, although the first had a tendency to hurt my eyes after looking at it for more than 20 seconds.



ⓘ That looks like an Amstrad if I'm not mistaken.

DELTA FORCE LAND WARRIOR

★ **Issue #99 Score 69%**
http://www.landwarrior.org/land_warrior/walkthrough/
<http://www.DF3.net/>

Not a sign of Chuck Norris anywhere. It may not have been as good as promised but at least it was in 3D this time. Here's another couple of polished sites. The first is pretty straightforward, the second is a *Delta Force* forum which should be able to address any specific problems both tactical and technical.



ⓘ Insert lighting fart gag here.

SIN

★ **Issue #70 Score 91%**
<http://www.ritualistic.com/features/walkthrough.shtml>

This is an interesting one. It's actually a listing of demo movies you can watch in-game, showing you how to complete the game. This site admits that they're not perfect guides but they do give you an excellent idea of exactly where in the game each solution applies. What a great idea.



ⓘ Behold! The man with the biggest left arm in the world.

EARTH 2150

★ **Issue #90 Score 86%**
<http://www.earth-orbiter.com/walkthrough.shtml>

Before the sequel to this good, albeit generally overlooked RTS appears, you may want to ensure you've finished this one first. This fansite will give you all the information you need on the first two campaigns. The third isn't quite finished yet but, fingers crossed, it'll be up and working by the time you read this.



ⓘ "Dere's nuttin' better dan a big foight, me boy."

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyers' guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

BENCHMARK GAME

Benchmark titles are the games that you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox

complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET

If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are now very few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a classic, we *mean* it.



FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS**HALF-LIFE****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #71 • 95%**

✪ Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the 'Generations' pack.

PUBLISHER Sierra
• 01189 209100

BUDGET**UNREAL TOURNAMENT****PCZ #81 • 90%**

✪ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it's still going to be more than a challenge for most.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

QUAKE III ARENA**PCZ #87 • 89%**

✪ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING**PCZ #101 • 85%**

This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

GUNMAN CHRONICLES**PCZ #97 • 84%**

✪ While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must buy for any fan of the genre.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209100

PROJECT IGI**PCZ #97 • 84%**

✪ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage orientated storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STAR TREK: VOYAGER – ELITE FORCE**PCZ #94 • 84%**

✪ The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

SERIOUS SAM**PCZ #102 • 81%**

NEWENTRY *Serious Sam* is a game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE**PCZ #99 • 80%**

✪ This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er... realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in America.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE**PCZ #88 • 80%**

✪ The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STRATEGY**BLACK & WHITE****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #100 • 95%**

One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI-enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
• 01753 549442

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS**PCZ #101 • 90%**

Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast paced in-er-face action that allows you to get down and dirty quite early on. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?

PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR**PCZ #89 • 90%**

✪ Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate enemy generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options never get in the way of instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS**PCZ #101 • 89%**

There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.

PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

AOE: COLLECTORS' EDITION**PCZ #84 • 88%**

✪ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII*, the gameplay has been honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and opt for this classic RTS.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

GROUND CONTROL**PCZ #92 • 86%**

✪ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 20 9100

CALL TO POWER II**PCZ #98 • 85%**

✪ *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

SUDDEN STRIKE**PCZ #96 • 85%**

✪ *Sudden Strike* mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.

PUBLISHER CDV • 0208 880 4144

HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm**PCZ #96 • 85%**

✪ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS *Homeworld* has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209100

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS**PCZ #97 • 83%**

✪ From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 01189 209 100

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #93 • 94%

★ Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder. **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



SYSTEM SHOCK 2

PCZ #80 • 91%

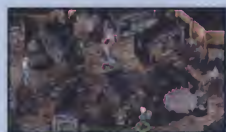
★ Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are. **PUBLISHER** Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE - REDEMPTION

PCZ #92 • 89%

★ This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart. **PUBLISHER** Activision • 01895 456 7000



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ #87 • 87%

★ An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorching of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue. **PUBLISHER** Interplay • 01628 423666



BALDUR'S GATE II

PCZ #96 • 85%

★ The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans. **PUBLISHER** Interplay • 01628 423666



FINAL FANTASY VII

PCZ #66 • 80%

★ Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it should be out on budget soon. **PUBLISHER** Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000



FALLOUT 2

PCZ #71 • 79%

★ Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper and one of the best RPGs money can buy. **PUBLISHER** Interplay • 01628 423666



DIABLO II

PCZ #93 • 72%

★ Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever. **PUBLISHER** Havas Interactive • 01189 209100



ICEWIND DALE

PCZ #93 • 75%

★ Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *BG2*. **PUBLISHER** Interplay • 01628 423666



ODIUM

PCZ #87 • 70%

★ Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences à la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Oidium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked for a while. **PUBLISHER** Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURES

GRIM FANDANGO

BENCHMARK GAME



PCZ #71 • 88%

★ If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die. **PUBLISHER** LucasArts • 020 7368 2255



BUDGET

DISCWORD NOIR

PCZ #79 • 87%

★ Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it. **PUBLISHER** Infogrames • 020 7258 3791



SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS

PCZ #98 • 87%

★ Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos. **PUBLISHER** Codemasters • 01926 814 132



THE NOMAD SOUL

PCZ #83 • 86%

★ Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off. **PUBLISHER** Eidos • 020 8636 3000



HITMAN: CODENAME 47

PCZ #98 • 85%

★ Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance. **PUBLISHER** Eidos • 020 8636 3000



BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR

PCZ #96 • 84%

★ As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear. **PUBLISHER** Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

PCZ #84 • 83%

★ LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest *Indy*, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists. **PUBLISHER** Activision • 01895 456 700



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

PCZ #98 • 82%

★ One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you, and undoubtedly *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out for the last couple of years. **PUBLISHER** Activision • 01895 456 700



DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN

PCZ #98 • 82%

★ It's not often that a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades. **PUBLISHER** Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767



METAL GEAR SOLID

PCZ #96 • 82%

★ Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles. **PUBLISHER** Microsoft • 0345 002000

RACING GAMES**COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0****BENCHMARK
GAME****PCZ #98 • 86%**

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is it.

PUBLISHER Codemasters
• 01926 814132

**MIDTOWN MADNESS 2****PCZ #96 • 84%**

Buckle up for some high-speed driving action, as you race around the streets of London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races, and improved controls, *MM2* is the new daddy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000****PCZ #97 • 82%**

While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**LE MANS 24 HOURS****PCZ #87 • 81%**

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

**GRAND PRIX 3****PCZ #94 • 80%**

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

**INSANE****PCZ #97 • 78%**

Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000****PCZ #90 • 78%**

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**RALLY MASTERS****PCZ #89 • 77%**

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all-important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8199

**TOCA 2****PCZ #76 • 76%**

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

**RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP****PCZ #84 • 75%**

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.

PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMULATORS**BATTLE OF BRITAIN****BENCHMARK
GAME****PCZ #99 • 89%**

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, and though the graphics and general gameplay may not be groundbreaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive
• 020 8343 7337

**FALCON 4****PCZ #72 • 89%**

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing still.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

**B-17 FLYING Fortress:
THE MIGHTY 8TH****PCZ #96 • 87%**

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.

PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive/Microprose • 01454 893893

**COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2****PCZ #97 • 87%**

If WWII dog fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**BUDGET****F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR****PCZ #68 • 85%**

This updated version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit superfluous for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title, now available on budget.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

**F/A-18E SUPER HORNET****PCZ #83 • 84%**

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure to watch out for friendly fire.

PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

**MIG ALLEY****PCZ #80 • 84%**

MIG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

**FLIGHT UNLIMITED III****PCZ #82 • 83%**

For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

**CRIMSON SKIES****PCZ #96 • 82%**

This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all-out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

**FLANKER 2.0****PCZ #85 • 82%**

Hardcore pilots with a taste for Yankee blood need look no further. Extremely hard to fly, but very rewarding nevertheless, *Flanker 2.0* recreates the real thing in minute detail. However, be warned: hours of practice are needed before you can go off shooting stuff.

PUBLISHER SSI • 01293 651300

SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2



BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #98 • 88%

★ *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone as he smashes his face against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456 7000



VIRTUAL POOL 3

PCZ #99 • 85%

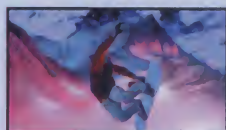
★ *VP3* has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. And with 18 different pool games it's a must for pool fanatics.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423 666



FIFA 2001

PCZ #97 • 83%

★ Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly make over. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are immaculate.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

PCZ #85 • 83%

★ *Snowboarding* is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 8738 8199



PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

PCZ #92 • 82%

★ It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



NBA LIVE 2000

PCZ #85 • 82%

★ As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



OPEN TENNIS 2000

PCZ #92 • 81%

★ Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Incredibly playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.
PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070



JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2

PCZ #68 • 78%

★ The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully-featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.
PUBLISHER Virgin Interactive • 020 7368 2255



ACTUA SOCCER 3

PCZ #72 • 72%

★ If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601



MILLENNIUM GAMES

PCZ #93 • 65%

★ Everyone remembers the good old days of Daley Thompson's joystick-wagging *Decathlon*. Sergei Bubka might not have quite the same pedigree, but this athletics simulation is loads of fun nonetheless and should keep you entertained for a while.
PUBLISHER Midas • 01782 633500

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01



BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #96 • 93%

★ This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000



THE SIMS

PCZ #87 • 85%

★ This game offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



CAESAR III

PCZ #70 • 84%

★ Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.
PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100



SIMCITY 3000

PCZ #74 • 83%

★ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

PCZ #75 • 82%

★ Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to *Nemesis*-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RT* is hugely addictive.
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive • 020 8569 1234

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER



BENCHMARK GAME

PCZ #82 • 87%

★ The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656



TERMINUS

PCZ #93 • 86%

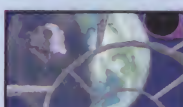
★ Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com



Freespace 2

PCZ #84 • 85%

★ Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4222



X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 • 81%

★ At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700



STARLANCER

PCZ #91 • 80%

★ While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

3D ACTION/STRATEGY**HIDDEN & DANGEROUS****BENCHMARK GAME****BUDGET****PCZ #79 • 90%**

★ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**HOSTILE WATERS****PCZ #101 • 87%**

A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely statistically. However, you can also leap into a unit and get involved in the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though.

PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200**GIANTS****PCZ #95 • 85%**

★ This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666**SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION****PCZ #97 • 84%**

★ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive with this edition. Although not as much fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100**ROGUE SPEAR****PCZ #84 • 83%**

★ We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900**ONLINE ONLY****COUNTER-STRIKE****BENCHMARK GAME****PCZ #98 • 93%**

★ The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.0 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.

DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net**EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK****PCZ #92 • 90%**

★ The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of other people and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000**ALLEGIANCE****PCZ #91 • 82%**

★ The first true online-only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, coordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000**ASHERON'S CALL****PCZ #88 • 76%**

★ The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in real life, it's a great tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002 000**ULTIMA ONLINE: RENAISSANCE****PCZ #92 • 75%**

★ It's been at the top for a while, but now that the sequel is on the way the original looks dated. *Renaissance* isn't enough of an improvement for it to compete with *EverQuest*—online RPGs are moving on.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442**PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS****DOOM**

★ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

**ULTIMA VII**

★ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

**ULTIMA UNDERWORLD**

★ We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

**DUNE II**

★ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

**SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER**

★ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

**UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN**

★ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

**MAGIC CARPET**

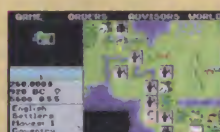
★ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

**WING COMMANDER**

★ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the *Wing Commander* series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

**TOMB RAIDER**

★ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch it. Do you remember your first encounter with the T-Rex?

**CIVILIZATION**

★ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

RETROZONE

NOVEMBER
1994

Going back in time on a magic carpet ride

RAVING ABOUT THE NINETIES Keith Pullin



MAGIC CARPET

Ride of a lifetime

In the autumn of '94 there was only one game on everyone's lips, and it was *Magic Carpet* (from Peter Molyneux of *Black & White* fame).

The aim of this earnest blend of action and strategy couldn't have been any simpler. As a wizard you had to ride your carpet zapping all manner of monsters while collecting the golden balls of mana they left behind. Once you had enough mana (or power) you could go and launch a cacophony of spells at the main enemy wizard of the level in order to oust him from his throne and claim the land as your own.

Technologically, *Magic Carpet* surpassed everything else when it was released. The 50 worlds featured

beautiful rolling hills and valleys as well as the best water effects ever seen. It was one of the first 3D games ever to hit the PC, a fact which scared many critics and gamers away when they first saw it. However, since those naive days it's managed to achieve legendary status within the industry and is now regarded by many as a game that was way ahead of its time.

But it was the party-like atmosphere of the multiplayer scuffles that really elevated this creation to legendary status. With up to eight players thrashing it out on a local network, *Magic Carpet* installed itself as essential after-hours office entertainment well into 1995.



"Where on earth did I park my magic carpet?"



Two worm things having a scrap. The golden balls are mana man...



Strange little people wandering around a landscape.

THE BEST OF THE REST



ARMOURD FIST
(PC)

Voxel technology was all the rage at the time of *Armoured Fist*'s release and so it was fortunate that the game possessed loads of them. Apart from its notable graphical style, *AF* was also a damn fine blast, providing you were into tanks and fists.



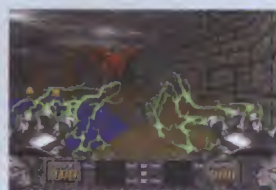
METALTECH: EARTHSIEGE
(PC)

Earthsiege was one of the first mech games to hit the PC. Many gamers said it was too difficult, but ultimately it proved its staying power, as the series still exists today under the guise of *Starsiege*. It will also soon be complemented by *Tribes 2*.



RISE OF THE TRIAD
(PC)

Apogee's FPS was one of the first multiplayer shooters to feature voice technology. The 'Remote Ridicule' option that allowed players to hurl abuse at each other was a first. *ROTT* remains popular to this day with new levels released as recently as October 2000.



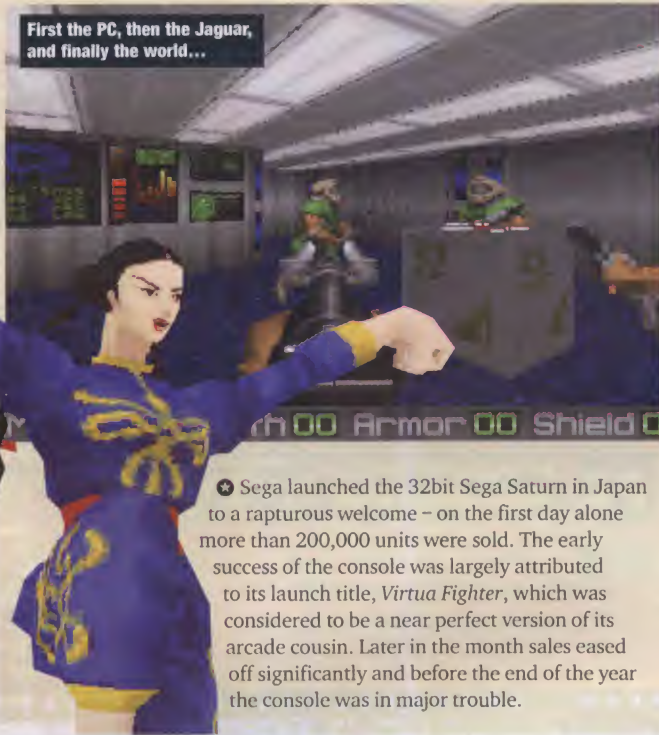
HERETIC
(PC)

Based on a modified *Doom* engine, *Heretic* starred the elven hero, Corvus, whose life consisted of running after monsters from other dimensions. With its great spell effects *Heretic* raked in the awards and even featured in *Playboy*. Why exactly? We don't know.



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
(SNES)

Without doubt this game is one of the best platform adventures ever produced. Utilising amazing rendering technology *DKC* elevated Rare back into the big time. If you get the chance, play this to discover what a real platform game should feel like.

<< PAST FORWARD >>**GAMING NEWS FOR NOVEMBER '94**First the PC, then the Jaguar,
and finally the world...

✦ Sega launched the 32bit Sega Saturn in Japan to a rapturous welcome – on the first day alone more than 200,000 units were sold. The early success of the console was largely attributed to its launch title, *Virtua Fighter*, which was considered to be a near perfect version of its arcade cousin. Later in the month sales eased off significantly and before the end of the year the console was in major trouble.



Daytona USA, the most fun you can have while sat down.

✦ Meanwhile, id Software's *Doom* went from strength to strength. After stunning the PC world, the world's most notorious game was released for the Jaguar 64.

✦ Sega's *Daytona USA* hit the arcades and was an instant hit. Utilising 'on-the-fly' camera direction, dazzlingly smooth graphics and perfect gameplay, *Daytona USA* was flawless. The game's reputation as a classic was sealed with the ability to link four 'twin' cabinets up in an eight-player race.

**TOP 5
1994****PC GAMES**

- 1 SIMCITY 2000
- 2 TIE FIGHTER
- 3 FRONTIER: ELITE 3
- 4 THEME PARK
- 5 X-WING

**PC CD ROM
GAMES**

- 1 THEME PARK
- 2 REBEL ASSAULT
- 3 SAM & MAX: HIT THE ROAD
- 4 THE JOURNEYMAN PROJECT
- 5 FRONTIER: ELITE 2

✦ compiled by charttrack

On your way to
a fetish party?
Can I come?

Strange objects on the ceiling should always be destroyed.

CYCLONES**Twisting and turning...**

This pioneering first-person shooter from Raven Software was remarkable for a couple of reasons. Firstly, *CyClones* featured the first engine (nicknamed STEAM) to successfully allow players to look around and aim with the mouse instead of keys. At the time this was obviously a new concept and Raven was unaware that in one fell swoop they were about to completely revolutionise the FPS interface.

At the other end of the scale *CyClones* was guilty of what was probably one of the worst FMV sequences ever witnessed on a

PC. Disgusted gamers around the globe demanded that their CD-ROM version was exchanged for the floppy disk version of the game which, due to storage restrictions, didn't contain the slow, blocky and generally shite footage in question.

The original videotape containing the full 30-minute production is now safely locked away in a hidden vault at Raven's HQ. Although, in a strange final twist to the tale, those responsible for the movie stated that the eight minutes used in the final game were "amazingly, far better than the stuff that wasn't used".

DOWN THE CHIPPY**Something for the techies...**

Despite more and more people turning to PCs for entertainment, November 1994 was an alarming time for high-profile chip manufacturer Intel. The company was finally forced to admit that more than 2 million of its new Pentium chips had shipped with something known as a floating-point bug. Basically, it meant that its new processor couldn't add up. After intense humiliation from numerous online communities, Intel begrudgingly replaced the chips with working ones.

None of this tomfoolery seemed to affect Microsoft though; the OS landlords experienced a phenomenal '94. Net

revenues for the year hit a staggering US\$4.6 billion, ensuring a net profit of US\$1.1 billion. The company also announced it was now one of the largest employers in the world with more than 15,000 employees around the globe.

This year also saw the emergence of several companies we've come to know and love. AltaVista Technology began feeling its way around the Net, Japanese developer Kesmai Corp appeared, Sony Computer Entertainment America was established and Take 2 Interactive began trading. The arrival of the now defunct Interactive Magic is also worthy of a mention, purely because of its incredible and instantaneous decline.

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Severance Blade of Darkness
Rugby 2001: England
Rugby 2001: Ireland
Rugby 2001: Scotland
Rugby 2001: Wales
Superbikes 2001
FIFA 2001
NBA Live 2001
Monkey 4: Escape From Monkey Island
American McGee's Alice

Evil Twin

F1 Racing Championship
Typing Of The Dead
Rowans Battle Of Britain

PC CD-ROM: EDUCATIONAL

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Science

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English/Maths/Science

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Blue Peter / Bob The Builder
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Deus-Ex
Diablo 1 & 2
Discworld Noir
Doom 1 & 2
Driver
Duke Nukem 3D
Dungeon Keeper 1 & 2
Grand Theft Auto 2
Escape Monkey Island
FA PL Fball Man. 2000
FIFA 2001
Final Fantasy 7, 8 & 9
Giants: Citizen Kabuto
Grand Theft Auto 1 & 2
Gunman Chronicles
Half Life
Heretic
Heroes of M&M III
Hidden & Dangerous
Hitman
I. Jones: Inf. Machine
Ice Wind Dale
Incoming
Kingdom Under Fire
Knights and Merchants
Messiah
Metal Gear Solid
Midtown Madness 1 & 2
Need For Speed Series
No One Lives Forever
Oni
Pharaoh
Populous the Beginning
Pro Rally 2001
Project IGI
Quake 3
Railroad Tycoon 2
Rainbow Six
Rayman 1 & 2
Rogue Squadron
Roller Coaster Tycoon
Shogun: Total War
Silver
Sim City 2000 & 3000
SiN
Soldier of Fortune
Star Trek Series
Starship Troopers
Swat 3
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WAR GAMES

PC GAMES

Desperados	E29	Diplomacy	E12
Tom Clancy's SSM	E13	War of the Worlds	E13
Sudden Strike	E28	Ardennes Offensive	E25
SWAT 3 elite edition	E28	Klinton Honour Guard	E8
Ground Control	E28	Mech Commander	E13
Homeworld: Cataclysm	E20	Abomination	E11
Delta Force: Land Warrior	E27	Dawn of Aces	E10
Earth 2150	E23	Warzone 2100	E13
Chronicles 2: Warlord of the Wasteland	E15	Steel Panthers 2	E9
Balders Gate II	E20	Battlezone	E10
Star Wars Force Commander	E19	Heavy Gear	E9
Panzer Dragon	E15	X-Com Apocalypse	E13
Stratego	E8	MI Tank Platoon 2	E13
Luftwaffe Commander + Panzer Commander	E9	Dracula	E5
Panzer General 3D Assault	E9	Gangsters	E15
Microsoft Flight Simulator	E9	Incoming	E15
Dungeon Keeper	E9	Chaos Gate	E10
Populous	E9	Air Warrior 3	E10
Warcraft II	E13	Grand Prix + Final Riding	E10
European Air War	E12	Samurai Spirits + Blade Warrior	E10
Majesty & Fire	E18	Thunder Brigade + Super Busby	E10
Earth 2150	E23	Ultra Fighters + Spearhead	E10
Cutthroats + Braveheart	E23	Flying Corps Gold + FA 18 Hornet	E10
Fighting Steel (W/W2 naval)	E14	Vangers	E10
Risk	E10		
Birth of the Federation	E12		
Commandos - behind enemy lines	E11		
Star Trek Generations	E8		

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Arcade PC

The Ultimate Game Cabinet

Introducing the ArcadePC mini Cabinet "The Ultimate Game Cabinet"

The ArcadePC is a home based take on the original design of a real arcade cabinet.

By playing those original arcade games in the ArcadePC cabinet, you can recapture that true classic arcade experience from the comfort of your own home or office. Simply install your PC into the ArcadePC, and plug in the built in 19" high resolution monitor and the control panel and create an experience like no other. A hidden keyboard pullout drawer allows you to have access to your keyboard and mouse at all times for PC applications.

The ArcadePC was designed for use with retro emulation programs such as M.A.M.E. (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator), Retrocade and commercial release titles such as Microsoft's "Return of the Arcade", and Hasbro's "Atari's Greatest Hits #1" all of which will run on your Personal Computer as well as breathing new life into half life, racing games etc.

Put these great PC based games in the ArcadePC cabinet and it's like a real arcade machine brought to your home or office!



Shown here is the Arcade PC cabinet in black with HotRod SE controller



★★★★★ 5 stars-computer and video games magazine
"It's the best joystick you'll ever get your palms around" "the ultimate joystick"
PC FORMAT MAGAZINE

Shown above is the best-selling Hot Rod joystick that comes bundled with an Arcade PC with dedicated MAME support and is available to purchase separately.

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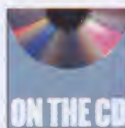
- ★ If possible, have your PC operating and near the phone when you call.
- ★ If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM and so on – plus the nature of the fault.
- ★ Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- ★ You need at least a Pentium 266 with 32Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROMs.
- ★ Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROMs are designed to run under Windows 95/98 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium II 300 with 64Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- ★ Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are 3D-accelerator only.

DISCLAIMER

- ★ This disc has been thoroughly tested at all stages of its production. However, it is always wise to use a virus checker on any software before running it.
- ★ Dennis Publishing Limited cannot accept any responsibility for any loss, disruption or damage to your data or your computer system (including hardware) which may occur while using either the disc or programs and data on it.



DEMOS

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

EON Digital Entertainment • Disc 2

This exclusive demo version allows you to play a special mission, which is designed to give you a taste of what's to come in the fast paced *Z: Steel Soldiers* when it's released. A delicious blend of simple ideas superbly executed, with excellent AI and a liberal dash of ambient sounds. Chow down.

CONTROLS

Select	Left Mouse Button
Build, Order & Attack Menus	Right Mouse Button
Deselect/Reselect	Space
Add/Remove from Selection	Shift + Left Mouse Button
Default Action	Left Mouse Button
Stack Order	Shift + Left Mouse Button
Force Fire	Control + Left Mouse Button
Multiple Attack	Control + Left Mouse Button (when selected)
Rotate Structure	Left/Right <>
Force Move	Alt + Left Mouse Button
Select Onscreen	O
Create Group	O-9
Scatter	X
Guard	G
Set Rally Point	R
In Game Menu	Esc
Pause	P
Help	H
Scroll	RMB
Zoom	Mouse Wheel/ Page Up/Down
User camera	Ctrl+F1-F7
Plan view	Ctrl+F8
Preset Camera	Ctrl + F9-F12
Angle/Tilt	Alt+ Right Mouse Button
Centre Base	Home

EXCLUSIVE



Attack is the best form of defence, apart from running, of course.



Go on... you know you want to.



"Damn, I think I left the gas on."

BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM

3000AD • Disc 1

Not a game for the faint-hearted – because in space no one can here you scream. This demo contains the first six episodes of *Battlecruiser Millennium*, which takes place in a small, planet-less galaxy and includes two instant action scenarios. It's an ideal opportunity to take a peak at some of the best features of this hardcore space simulation.

There are a couple of compatibility issues with this demo, and you may find it doesn't install properly due to CD/DVDROM errors.

CONTROLS

Check out the readme file, as there are way too many for us to list.

E-RACER

Rage Software • Disc 2

Paul Presley cheerfully pronounced that *ERacer* could well be the "best racing game the online world has ever seen" now it's your turn to see if he's right. Arcade mode allows you to access the Town Centre track for a *Blue Brothers*-style drive through. Time trial sets your skill against the clock before embarking on the LAN game option.

CONTROLS

Throttle	Up Arrow	Handbrake	Ctrl
Brake	Down Arrow	Reset Car Left	Shift
Turn Left	Left Arrow	Rear Camera	Space
Turn Right	Right Arrow	View Change	Enter
Gear Shift Up	Q	Pause	P or Escape
Gear Shift	Down A	Horn Right	Shift



EXCLUSIVE



"Seafood carbonara and garlic bread to go please."

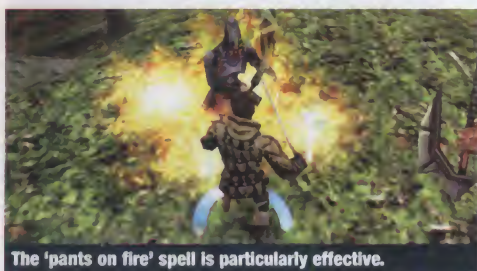
SUMMONER

THQ • Disc 2

This demo catapults you directly into the action of *Summoner's* combat mode, as you test out your metal on some local evil forces while learning the basics of summoning. Control the main character Joseph along with the sneaky backstabbing Fleece and summon up a few nasties such as the Red Minotaur or a Blood Elemental to fight by your side.

CONTROLS

Switch between arty members	TAB
Toggle camera height	F12
Chain attack	Right click when you see the chain symbol over your selected character
Spell Menu	C
Add map reference	Ctrl + Left Click
Map	M
Inventory	I



The 'pants on fire' spell is particularly effective.



STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

Activision • Disc 1

This squad-based RTS game isn't just for hard-core Trekkies, we promise. Would we lie to you? In this demo you control a party of four specialists in a two-dimensional isometric map. Your mission is to infiltrate a secret base and rescue a few Klingon scientists along the way.

CONTROLS

Pause	Enter
Select Entire Team	A
Cancel Orders	Backspace
Cycle Movement	X
Toggle Vision Cones	V
Toggle Sound Cones	S
Display Objectives	O
Toggle Mini-map	M
Zoom In	Num +
Zoom Out	Num xx

HOSTILE WATERS

RAGE • Disc 1

This demo gives you three tutorial levels to help you get to grips with the intense action of *Hostile Waters*, a game Korda openly claims: "It makes me wet with excitement, but drenches most of the opposition by pissing all over it". Issue commands from the safety of the map room then toggle into the live map for some serious action.

CONTROLS

F1	Toggle between strategy and live action maps
Forward	W
Backwards	S
Left	A
Right	D
Turn	Mouse



Isn't that the old BBC logo?

STAR WARS — EPISODE 1: THE BATTLE FOR NABOO

Activision • Disc 1

The Trade Federation has taken control of the planet and it's up to you to swoop in and save the farmers from the invaders — as well as generally do some damage. We didn't rate this game particularly well, but have a go and see what you think.

CONTROLS

Switch	View	Roll	e
Brake	s/Mouse wheel	Tight Turn Right	Ctrl
Thrust	w	Turn Left	Left Arrow
Fire Blasters	Space/ Left Mouse Button	Turn Right	Right Arrow
Fire Secondary	Left Alt/Right Mouse Button	Craft Up	Up Arrow



Free as a bird, accurate as a dead hedgehog.



Die Jar Jar...

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS

Codemasters • Disc 1

In this one level demo play as part of an infantry squad on a mission to neutralise the hostile forces on some small islands. It's a great taster for the full game which features more than 30 missions and gives you the chance to try your hand at playing as an infantry soldier, a tank commander, a pilot and a special forces operative.

CONTROLS

Forward	W	Open Action Menu	Return
Sprint	E or Shift+W	Call Command Menu	0-9
Strafe Left	A	and select menu items	
Strafe Right	D	Call Command Menu	Backspace
Backwards	S	and go back a level in the command structure	
Fire/Throw/Use	Left Mouse Button	Switch Command View On/Off	Numpad
Move Fast	Shift+Direction Key	Switch Weapon View On/Off	V or Numpad 0
Lie Down / Stand Up	Q or Z	Zoom	Right Mouse Button
Reload Weapon	R		
Action Menu	Mouse Wheel		



DESPERADOS

Infogrames • Disc 2

You can't get much rougher and tougher than *Desperados*, it's effectively *Commandos* in the Wild West. This demo has you playing the rugged hero John Cooper who, along with the sharp shooting Doc McCoy, have to clear up a typical wild west town and rid it of some particularly pesky types. Pack your big guns, this isn't going to be easy.

CONTROLS

Mini Map	M
Zoom In/out	+/- or Mouse wheel
Select Multiple characters	Left Shift + 1-6
De-select all characters	D#
Toggle character action	G, H, J, K, L
Reload default weapon for selected character	G
Crouch	C
Stand up	S
Quick save	F5
Quick load	F8
Move with weapon aimed	Ctrl
Contour mode	Caps Lock

ADVENTURE PINBALL: FORGOTTEN ISLAND

EA • Disc 1

We can't guarantee that this game will turn you into a pinball wizard, but it's an entertaining way to waste time. There are lots of bonuses to be discovered on this demo table while you attempt to save a village of illiterate cannibals from the local volcano by executing some nifty flips.

CONTROLS

Fire Ball	Down Arrow
Left Flipper	z
Right Flipper	/



ON THE CD PATCHES

CD1

Half-Life 1.1.0.6 (from any version)
Counter-Strike 1.0 to 1.1 for retail
version (standard patch on disc 2)

Half-Life: Opposing Force 1.1.0.6

ON THE CD UTILITIES

CD1

Direct X 8.0 for Windows 95/98
Millennium Edition
Direct X 8.0 for Windows 2000

Netscape Online

ON THE CD MOD WATCH

CD2

UT Infiltration 2.853
UT Infiltration Patch
UT Infiltration Maps
Half-Life: Fire Arms

Half-Life: Fire Arms v2.5
Q3 Jailbreak
Soldier Of Fortune - Silver Forces 2
Counter-Strike 1.0 to 1.1 Update

ON THE CD EXTENDED PLAY

CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb gives you the low down on the new *Shogun: Total War* and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* maps

EXTENDED PLAY

This month we bring you a right old mixture of adrenaline-fuelled action and strategy

★ KEEPING IT REAL Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

On the CD this month you'll find no less than 11 maps for *Shogun*. All you have to do is unzip the files into your shogun/battle/maps directory, select them as custom battles in the game menu and set them up as desired. Then it's on with your general's hat and into battle.

All you have to do to try out the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* maps is copy or unzip the .prk files into your Activision/THPS2 directory and load them into the map editor.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

This month we get to put on our velvet lounge suits and pull two very different games out of the PC ZONE magic hat. The first gaming bunny rabbit is *Shogun: Total War*, a stunning real-time strategy game that blew the whole team away when we saw it, and sitting close behind is that icon of modern trendiness *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2*. So, whether you feel more at home on the battlefield or in the concrete jungle, you should find something here to tickle your fancy...

SEKIGAHARA (HISTORICAL BATTLE)

Filename: Sekigahara_Kasin_Map.zip

Size: 118Kb

Rating: ★★★★★

Sekigahara 1 by Kasin is a great copy of an ancient battlefield. The central area is a treeless, level plain with several roads snaking through it, while around the edge of the map the ground rises into quite steep, wooded hills. The west, north-east and south-east positions are the most heavily wooded, with only a few other trees dotted around between these areas. The high ground, while imposing, is of little use if you choose to fight in the central plain because your archers and musketeers simply don't have the range to take advantage of it, so canny defenders should move their forces away from the centre and try to use this natural feature to their benefit. The woods could also be used to hide some troops but they would have to move very quickly to get into position without being seen. This is a difficult map to win if caught out in the open.



This is what happens when you let some of your troops get isolated.

MAP OF THE MONTH
SEKIGAHARA

★ ISHIBASHIYAMA (Historical Battle)

Filename: Ishibashiyama_

Axial_map.zip

Size: 51Kb

Rating: ★★★★★



Superior use of ranged weapons can be devastating.

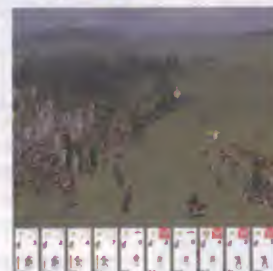
Ishibashiyama by Axial is another recreation of a genuine battleground. The eastern half of the map is covered with dense forest – there are no open spaces or paths at all here – and the two armies face each other along the western edge of this woodland. To the west, the ground becomes hilly and increasingly barren. The forest provides a good opportunity to hide your strength, either as a defending army that wishes to hold troops in reserve or as an attacker that might wish to move soldiers forward without being detected. The high ground provides a good chance to outflank your enemy and to attempt a two-pronged attack – many attacking CPU armies will try this tactic so watch out for it. This area to the west is very valuable if you anticipate a frontal assault as musketeers and archers can be used to great effect if it's under your control.

★ MAGYAR ORSAG] [

Filename: MagyarOrsag2.zip

Size: 123Kb

Rating: ★★★★★



If all else fails, sheer weight of numbers will help.

Magyarorszag by Tosa Inu is made up of a gently rolling

landscape with plenty of small hills and clumps of trees, but has little in the way of dramatic scenery. However, The positioning of the trees on the tops of the hills allows them to form a vital shield from prying enemy eyes and with the lower ground levels just deep enough to hide small troop movements, it is possible to move around largely undetected. Bear in mind, of course, that your enemy will realise this too, so be careful not to string out your forces into an ambush situation. The trees also act to slow down and break up large troop formations, so be careful not to let part of your advance slow down too much. This can act to your advantage as a defender, of course – find a spot of high ground with trees in front of it and your archers or musketeers will be able to take out enemy soldiers at their leisure before moving them becomes necessary.

★ ISHI GA TOCHI

Filename: Ishigatochi.zip

Size: 132Kb

Rating: ★★★★★



Get the trees between you and the enemy attacks.



This one seems evenly matched.

Ishi Ga Tochi by Tosa Inu is a landscape dominated by lots of hills. They're not very steep, but the sheer number of them will tire your troops more quickly than in a flatter area. There are around half a dozen small wooded areas near



"You don't see me at all. Right?"

the middle of the map and although these aren't enough to hide a large force, a couple could be used by the defence to hide some units' hard-hitting cavalry. There are a few more isolated trees, which would serve to break up a formation, but these are unlikely to have any real impact. Unless you have a numerical advantage this isn't an easy map to win on, as there is no immediate advantage to holding high ground. Defenders must make the attackers do the running and wait for them to tire, while the attacking force must keep tightly knit and concentrate their forces while using the ground to whatever advantage they can.

★ MIZUNASHIGAWA 2

Filename: Mizunashigawa2.zip

Size: 84Kb

Rating: ★★★★★



Shogun proves that war really is total hell.

Mizunashigawa 2 is a challenging map from Axial that will test your powers of concentration whether you are commanding attack or defence forces. Almost the entire eastern half of the map is taken up with heavily wooded hills, with little open ground other than a single path that meanders down from the north-eastern corner. This gives way to a deep north-

south valley on the other side of which lies a large castle, it's up to the attacking forces to capture this castle. As in other maps, moving through the trees will make it difficult to co-ordinate an attack, but luckily this particular annoyance can be avoided here as the castle will prove to be the main

“Whatever your mission, remember that heavy cavalry attacking downhill will overwhelm just about anything”

battleground. There is no easy way for an attacking force to approach the castle, and even placing musketeers or archers onto high ground will be of little use – they have limited opportunities to see their enemy. Choosing to defend this castle is the easy option as there is only one way in, so there is much more fun to be had by attempting to conquer it. Even superior forces may well find this difficult, as the castle entrance will become a carnage-filled bottleneck.

★ TOTONI

Filename: Totoni.zip
Size: 54Kb
Rating: ⚡⚡⚡



① Moving away from the hills was a bad move here.



① Out in the open, deploy your forces extra carefully.

Totoni is a great map by The Force that is a real opportunity for tactical troop placement. The landscape is lush but very hilly with some sharp escarpments and rocky outcrops. Small wooded areas are dotted about the map with a couple of larger forests near the middle. This is a great map for demonstrating the advantages of holding the higher ground as the player who takes control of vantage points will find projectile weapons have greater range and accuracy and his or her troops won't get tired nearly as

quickly. Some of these high points are almost unapproachable from the front and any infantry caught from above by archers or musketeers are in real trouble. Always remember to protect your stand-off weapon forces though, as your enemy will seek to outflank them and cut them off from the body of your army. So,

when defending try to use the high ground for musketeers and the trees to hide your cavalry, and when attacking make sure you avoid the arrows raining down from the hills (even better, try to get your own archers up there). Whatever your mission, however, remember that heavy cavalry attacking downhill will overwhelm just about anything.

★ YAMAGAHARA

Filename: Yamagahara.zip
Size: 129Kb
Rating: ⚡⚡⚡⚡



① From the hilltop, there is a much better tactical view.



① The first to the high ground grabs the advantage.

Yamagahara by Tosa Inu is an enjoyable map with a variety of geography. The southern end of the area is largely flat with a couple of gently rolling hills, but moving northwards the environment changes, becoming progressively steeper until the northern extremities are almost entirely hillside. Tree cover is concentrated in the south and middle of the map as the remainder is too barren. The trees form a number of wooded areas interspersed by open ground, and would definitely break up and hinder any large formations. A path runs along the valleys between the hills in the middle of the map. This is a map in which

holding the high ground is a great advantage – if you can get a decent number of musketeers onto one of the bigger hills they will be difficult to attack and will be able to rain down death on your enemies from afar. The layout also lends itself to deep flanking manoeuvres with the steep hills making it possible to get a sizeable force behind your enemy.

★ MAKY VALLEY2

Filename: Makyvalley2.zip
Size: 37Kb
Rating: ⚡⚡⚡⚡



① You can't see the wood for the trees, apparently.



① There are about 10,000 enemy soldiers in there. Really dunno where though...

Maky Valley 2 by Kraellin is a map dominated by forests that almost completely fill a large valley. This valley runs from east to west between two steep escarpments and naturally enough the two armies are facing each other across the divide. Co-ordinating your forces in this environment is extremely difficult – the trees will instantly break up your formations, block your view of the enemy and exacerbate the speed differences between your various units. It becomes difficult to make sure that all your troops can be engaged when you need them. Defending is therefore the best option and you should position your troops where the trees will inconvenience your enemy the most – preferably forcing them to march uphill to attack you as well. They should be just about exhausted by the time they can attack. This is an innovative map that uses geography that any attacking general worth his name would avoid like the plague. If you fancy a major challenge, try to attack an equal army on this map and see if you can win.



Don't let the enemy get to the high ground first



Trees are effective at breaking up cavalry charges.



Big castle + one small gate = carnage.



Totoni needs plenty of tactical thinking.



A pretty town – don't let it be your graveyard.



Then we all gather in the middle for a chat and some songs and stuff.



Looks a bit unstable.

WOODED ROADS 4

★ WOODED ROADS 4
Filename: WoodedRoads4.zip
Size: 41Kb
Rating: ★★★★★

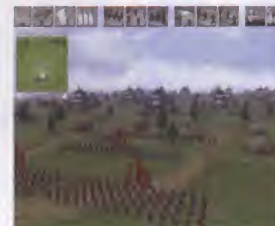


ⓘ This looks like quite an encouraging report.

Wooded Roads 4 from Kraellin is a nice map with a pretty little agricultural setting. The battleground is a crossroads with a village of some two-dozen assorted buildings and a temple. There are also some paddy fields if you fancy splashing around and getting your feet wet. In the top corner of the map is another temple with an outbuilding and this is reached by following one of the roads from the crossroads – should you wish to do so. Most of the map is open ground and is level with only a few slight changes in elevation. There are a lot of single trees dotted around the village area and significant small wooded areas to the north, north-east and south-west. The latter is quite extensive and could enable an approaching army to get quite close to the village without being detected if they were careful, although it would seriously impede their progress if an en masse attack was required. This is offset by the flatness of the landscape – apart from the edge of the woods there is nowhere to hide and attacking players are more than likely to be seen from quite some distance away.

ⓘ A not so friendly looking chap on a very large horse.

★ PAGODA CITY 3
Filename: Pagodacity-3.zip
Size: 36Kb
Rating: ★★★★★



ⓘ Move in there and you'll fragment your forces.

If you've ever wondered what medieval close-quarter battle is like then this map by Kraellin is the one to find out with. The layout consists of 16 pagodas in a loosely circular area with an open centre and some two or three dozen small huts and other buildings around the edge of the city. The two armies start off on opposite sides and whoever is first into the maze of buildings is unfortunately at an immediate disadvantage as his or her troops will quickly become fragmented and vulnerable to attack. Defence is by far the easiest option here as any attack is difficult to co-ordinate – your soldiers will be attacking in small numbers if they have to go through the city and any that skirt around the outside will likely arrive too late to be of much use. One option as an attacker is to time a flanking manoeuvre to allow you to get your forces into a good offensive position without inviting retaliation and then trying to goad your enemy into moving into the town. A feint through the middle will probably draw some in, but you'll have to balance the likely sacrifice of your men against the need to disrupt the enemy's defences.

★ RIDGES 1
Filename: Ridges1.zip
Size: 36Kb
Rating: ★★★★★



ⓘ This terrain will hide your forces, but it'll also exhaust them.



ⓘ This lot must be totally knackered by now...

This is a difficult map and will likely prove quite exhausting for you and your troops. The only word for this map is "lumpy" as the whole area is made up of a maze of ridges and deep hollows. Imagine turning the average hiking boot upside down and fighting a battle on the landscape that the sole would create – that's what Ridges 1 is like. The hollows are often filled with trees, which makes them doubly difficult to negotiate. As usual, the high ground dominates, and with the ridges so tightly packed, it's possible for projectile-armed troops to fire down into the dips and across to the next ridge. This is offset to some degree by the fact that these troops are isolated and hard to protect, so fast moving cavalry should be able to creep up on them and mow them down if carefully manoeuvred. Against a smart opponent, this map can be a general's nightmare.

NET ADDRESSES

Make sure your swords are pointing in the right direction with these *Shogun: Total War* websites

www.pczone.co.uk

The name that's synonymous with everything great in life... which means games, of course.

www.totalwar.com

The official *Shogun* website. 'Nuff said.

www.planettotalwar.com

The Planet Total War fansite includes more great websites for you to check out along with new maps and a *Shogun* Hall of fame.

www.totalwar.org

A great fansite with maps, screens, discussion forums, utilities and loads more. Definitely one to bookmark.

<http://terazawa.totalwar.org>

A site to help you win at *Shogun*. You'll find historical information, tactical tips, downloads and a translation of Sun Tzu's *The Art Of War*, which is essential reading for any tactician.

<http://samurai.bigsitecity.com>

A website that isn't specifically to do with *Shogun*, but is a wealth of information about the samurai way of life. Well worth a visit.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

On the CD you'll find ten **THPS2** maps from the many sent in by **ZONE** readers when we suggested the idea a few issues ago

★ DA HOPMISETER 1

Filename: Da Hopmiser01.prk

Size: 8Kb

Rating: ○○○○



Da Hopmiser will keep you busy – it's not easy!

Da Hopmiser 1 from Adam Best, is a map held back somewhat by limitations as to how much can be put in one park. That's a shame because there are enough different levels here to make it interesting, with a small sunken half-pipe (which leads to a couple of cloverleaf shaped pits otherwise hidden from view), a ramp, rails, steps and three different main elevations too. There is a big open space in one corner that is crying out for a trick opportunity. Overall, it's a nice map that will need some practice to get around properly if you want to make the best use of its potential.

★ AIR TRICK PIT

Filename: Air Trick Pit.zip

Size: 1Kb

Rating: ○○

Air trick pit by KraKto\$is8 has a simple layout (at 1Kb in size that should come as no surprise) with a square pit and a raised area in the middle, from which you get to launch yourself heavenwards. A huge amount of airtime is possible in this park. The lack of other obstacles means that dodging sharp edges or sudden holes in walls isn't a problem, but you can still rack up some nice air tricks.

★ H4X0R 4R3N4

Filename: MAKParks.zip

Size: 2Kb

Rating: ○○○○



H4X0R 4R3N4 has a monster half-pipe to send you into orbit.

This park by Marijn Kentie is one of three in the MAKParks .zip file and is great fun. There are no less than three pools, plenty of rails, a big half-pipe and, of course, the almost obligatory pit of spikes to catch out the unwary. Perhaps these should be allowed in real competitions – the threat of a bloody death would certainly

spice up watching Xtreme sports on TV. This map works well despite having a lot of open space and is great for air tricks. The other two parks in the .zip are P1mp Pipe – a huuuuge half-pipe (***) – and School Spinout (****), which is a mix of just about everything you can imagine.

★ HEADLESS CHIKEN RUN

Filename: Headless Chicken

Run.prk

Size: 5Kb

Rating: ○○○○



Headless Chicken Run is great fun, so long as you can manage to avoid the spikes.

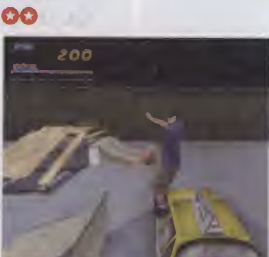
At 5Kb, Headless Chicken Run by Daniel Taylor is a medium-sized map that is all about airtime control. There are some really big jump opportunities here with a large sunken half-pipe layout at one end of the map, a deep pit in one corner with four ramps for jumping over it and what is probably the most dangerous pit of spikes seen in any map here. It might be possible to jump over this pit if you have some sort of rocket assistance, but otherwise it's best avoided unless you want to get skewered. There are the best part of 100 spikes in there – and they all hurt. The rest of the map has a long rail and a wall that will give you even more jumping practice

★ PARKLIFE

Filename: Parklife.prk

Size: 5Kb

Rating: ○○○



Hitch a ride on a New York cab in Park Life.

Parklife, from Ste VC, has a medium-sized layout with a good variety of trick opportunities built in. You'll find a reasonably high half-pipe, rails, a pit, sloped benches and even a couple of New York taxis buried in the

NET ADDRESSES

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

www.pczone.co.uk

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www.topsitelists.com/games/curved/topsites.html

More of a jumpstation than a THPS2 website, this page will list the top 100 sites dedicated to the Tony Hawk's skating games. You must bookmark it – now.

www.sportplanet.com/thps/

One of the biggest THPS sites but so far a bit lacking in PC specific stuff. They're working on it though, so it has to be worth watching.

www.thps2.f2s.com/

A multi-format repository of THPS2 skaters, cheats, news and more.

middle of the map just begging to be jumped over. There is also a steep ramp leading to a small raised area which you can either just jump down from or – if you can get yourself lined up in time – use to get onto one of the two steep rails that go back down to ground level. Overall the map is fun, with enough variety to keep you busy. There are a couple of minor niggles, however, as the half-pipe is a little bit too close to the fence and coming down one side of the bench obstacle will earn you a faceful of chains as well, but that shouldn't be a problem if you keep your wits about you.

though, with the centres of the 'B' being a couple of huge nipple-shaped prongs that stick up for the floor and beg for your attention. If you can get on top of one of these you can really boost your score. The map title is apt enough as you'll soon think you're running over a floor made of battleship armour, although the constant rumbling does wear a bit thin after a while.

★ POOOOL

Filename: poool.zip

Size: 2Kb

Rating: ○○○



What have wombats got to do with it anyway?

Poool is a big map with probably the most convoluted pool design here. In fact, the pool itself is so full of twists and turns that designer KraKto\$is8 ran out of space to put in any more obstacles. There is, however, a monster starting ramp that's worth revisiting and a wall in the corner that should be treated with caution – the gap hides a pit full of spikes that'll make short work of you if you fall down there. [X]

★ HEAVY METAL MOSHPIT

Filename: Heavy Metal

Moshpit.zip

Size: 1Kb

Rating: ○○○



Heavy Metal Moshpit means big air, big score, big noise!

Another simple layout from KraKto\$is8, but one that you'll enjoy for easy fun with more grinding and sliding opportunities than you can shake a mucky stick at. The map is split over two main levels with the upper area forming a raised capital 'E' shape and the lower a recessed capital 'B'. The latter area is more of a challenge



Tony Hawk's 2 is one game that definitely didn't fall on its arse.

BENCHMARK PARK

Filename: Benchmark Park.prk

Size: 8Kb

Rating: ○○○○

Benchmark Park by AlAnRich and MickyWill is an involving experience with lots of opportunities to try out just about every trick in the book. At 8Kb, this is one of the biggest maps here, and it's feature packed with two pits, several ramps, rails, benches, more ramps and enough other variations to keep most fans happy. You can collect a hefty points total on this map, so it's well worth a go.



Benchmark Park is feature packed.

PARK OF THE MONTH
BENCHMARK

COMMENT



Ready to put pen to paper because we gave your favourite game 23 per cent? Now hold on there. Maybe it's all just a matter of taste...

TASTING AWAY James Lyon

Now here's a thing: different people have different tastes (sound of thousands of foreheads being slapped across the country). No, really. There are people out there who like piercing their own genitals. There are people out there who'll put clueless twats like Hear'Say in the number one slot. There are even – and I know this is hard to believe – people out there who find Jim Davidson funny. But these people don't need to be driven out of town with a large pitchfork, they need tolerance and understanding, even if they do smell a bit funny.

Likewise, when Dave Woods reviewed *No One Lives Forever*, awarding it 69 per cent, there were still some of you out there who bought it anyway, and played it and loved it. And we're not questioning your ability to find value in a game you just spent £30 on. The point is, when you review a game you're going on a specific gut feeling of what you thought of

it. A high score shouldn't be given depending on whether you think your mate's going to like it or whether it's guaranteed to occupy the top of the charts for months on end. A score should be given for purely selfish reasons, factoring in your own personality in addition to the game's more obvious merits and failings. Sure, you have to be objective in some areas, but if you're gnawing at your desk and rolling your eyes as

Even the most sublime game of the year can have its dissenters. Brace yourselves, I know you won't believe it, but there's a few people around who'd rather stick knitting needles in their eyes than play the divine genius that is *Half-Life*. How easy it is to criticise it as 'a routinely linear experience, with shoddy graphics, little in the way of a plot, relying on trite shock value to garner the player's attention'.

“It doesn't seem the case that giving a game a high mark is any indication of how well it is going to sell”

you make your way through the next 'critically-acclaimed' hit that's nobody's feeling but your own.

If a reviewer finds himself wallowing in the hyperbole of PR speak and beginning to believe the audacity of the bullet points of a carefully-worded press release instead of taking note of what's up there on the actual screen, it isn't going to benefit anyone in the long-run.

One reviewer may think of, say, the lack of a mid-mission save in *Project IGI* as an extremely debilitating effect in the lowering of the final score, another may find it a refreshing challenge that can only enhance the playability. The thing is, both are right. The only parameter to proving this is to mention it either way in the review. A score below 90 per cent doesn't automatically consign

a game to the dustbin, it just means it had faults that the reviewer at the time thought were substandard. Naturally, shoddy interfaces and bugs deserve to knock a score down, but if a reviewer's going to knock points off because they don't like the colour of the sky they're still allowed to do it. All that's needed is to point out the reasons in the review so the reader understands why.

Even a game that receives 50 per cent (as we say, 'usually good fun but has a limited long-term appeal') has the ability to float one or two boats on the gaming ocean. If you can put up with its problems, then maybe you will think the game's worth more. But then, that's your opinion. There's no need to fly off the handle and complain that we're wrong because we found it to be the equivalent of sticking our heads up a badger's arse. Just sit down, enjoy that 'ignored classic', and acknowledge that at least we pointed out its problems to others who may not be as forgiving as you. The value of

a game isn't found wholly in a number between 1 and 100, it's in the main text. There's a lot of crap out there, and if you're going to argue over whether a game deserves 60 or 90 per cent, try playing all the way through a couple of dire sub-20 per cent software titles and seeing where the real division lies.

Ironically, it doesn't seem the case that giving a game a high mark is any indication of how well it's going to sell. Just take a look at the now defunct Looking Glass, its games were selflessly championed by the industry, but they still didn't sell in large enough amounts to keep the company going and it was forced to close.

A classic is only a classic if the reviewer finds the playing experience fun and entertaining. Nothing more, nothing less. Of course, no reviewer in their right mind is going to give something like *Army Men* a score higher than a model's IQ, but as we said, even the best game can be a case of different strokes for different folks. But what do we care? We're always right.



"Half-Life? A rubbish game. Far too linear, and that alien planet bit is poo."



"Who said adventures were dead? Erotica Island is an absolute classic." It takes all sorts...



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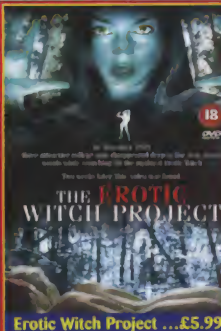
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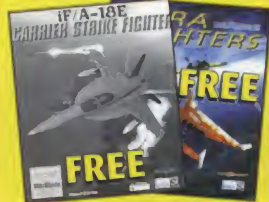
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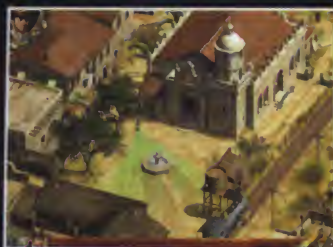
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